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FOOT-LOOSE IN INDIA

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Adventures of a News Chaser from Khyber's grim gash of death to the Tiger Jungles of Bengal and the Burmese battle-ground of the Black Cobra

By

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INTRODUCTION

ON June 22, 1929, Toronto police swooped down on a hobo "jungle" sprawled along the waterfront of that city and gathered in 108 bums and sundry vagabonds, who had been living there since early spring.

The bums turned out to be strong, healthy, well-fed, broke, but cheerful. Because these were boom days of bigger and better business this was news. Stock markets were reporting five million share days, prices were on the hop, more motor cars were being sold than ever before in the history of time. Wheat was $1.20 a bushel. There was little unemployment. Why then should 108 homeless and friendless men be living in filth and poverty?

The managing editor of the *Toronto Star* was curious on this point. He wanted to find out about this hobo business and have it written about. He chose for the job Gordon Sinclair who for five years had been an anonymous but active news hound shooting around the country in search of copy; usually crime. Sinclair had just turned 29. His reputation, if any, was that of a truculent rather sloppily dressed young man usually in need

of a shave. It didn't require disguise for him to look like a bum.

"I want you to go out and live with these bums," the editor instructed. "Travel with them. Go where they go. See what they eat and where they get it. Find out if they're crooks or just shiftless loafers. Then come back here and write about it."

Sinclair mingled with three knights of the road, eventually hit the trail and travelled part way to New York City by box car. One of the bums opened his head with a club. When he returned he reported there was nothing to write. "Why; didn't anything happen?" "Well, we just went on the bum. The guys were trying to beat their way to England."

"Well, write about it," the editor insisted. "That's what we want to know." Sinclair sat down and wrote. Brief, curt sentences. A story of bums written so that even the box car hoboes could understand it. Readers seemed pleased with this brief, snappy word picture. They liked the crisp dialogue. They wrote and said it would be a good idea if this hobo news getter actually did bum his way to England and find out a few things. While these suggestions were coming in Sinclair was flying over the Labrador coast with Louis Cousinniere of Quebec trying to exterminate a half million white porpoises who had invaded the St. Lawrence and were slaughtering the edible fish.

On his return he was sent to England where

he loafed up and down the British Isles for six weeks, eventually crossing from Scotland to Germany, where he was arrested. This started the Sinclair wanderings. In the following three years he covered 160,000 miles in 38 countries, wrote millions of words.

In the early part of 1930 he sailed to Germany, thence south through the fiery Balkans. Later that year to the waters of the Spanish Main; Cuba and thence by the Caribbean and Gulf to Honduras. North overland through Mexico to the Rio Grande.

In 1931 to Morocco, Algeria and Spain where he witnessed the overthrow of Alfonso and interviewed Spain's first president. In 1932 he sailed around the world.

This book, which limits itself to India, comes as part of that 1932 trip, and is the first published by its author. All the material contained herein was gathered at the expense and suggestion of the *Toronto Star*.

It records a five month journey through India, and should not be considered either a guidebook or textbook to that fabulous puzzling land.

TORONTO, CANADA, 1932.

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THE PASS OF DEATH

FOR 3,000 years the turbulent tribesmen of Afghan's black hills have stormed the Khyber Pass and looted the plains of India.

They still do it. Probably they always shall while warm blood fills their veins, for here in the cold heart of Asia men are men and might is right. Gone are the puny Punjabis of the Pagan peninsula, vanished are the hungry Hindus to whom life is a fluttering temporary thing of crawling inferiority. Here live defiant giants who'd sooner slit a throat than chew a steak. An unruly but clean-living horde with black or crimson beards and deep hair-covered chests. At the slightest opportunity they sweep down from their mountain lairs, sack the caravans from Persia, raid the villages and gallop away with the spoils of medieval marauders; women, weapons, wine and wealth. Given half a chance they'd set the North West Frontier aflame with the fires of bloodshed and rebellion.

It was to this he-man land of adventure that I wandered early in 1932 without companions, plans, worries, prejudices, guidebooks, a message to the heathen or something to sell.

I was a foot-loose prowler in that grim gash of sudden death, the Khyber Pass. My idea was to explore this fantastic land of India as the mood suited me going when, where and how I pleased; if possible off the beaten path.

The long run up from Bombay might have been stuffy, dusty torture, but new sights, smells and sounds, with the promise of gay adventure ahead made the two days and nights on the Frontier Mail pass quickly and happily. Picturesque people were all the time coming in and out of the car; sometimes even sharing my bed, and they all spotted me as a greenhorn globe girdler and helped the business of exploring along with tales of wild doings up in the black belt of battle.

The train was crowded to the rooftops with everything from goats to ash-smeared beggars. They give you and me, who are sahibs, a choice. We can ride up front and get the smoke of the engine or we can ride aft and inhale the ozone from 500 unwashed bodies. Swell fun!

I had no booking for the frontier flier and there seemed to be at least a million screaming people waiting to get aboard at Bombay's elaborate new station. When you figure that India has 125,000,000 people living north of Delhi and only two through trains a day you don't wonder at the mob. An uniformed chap in a trick beard sidled up just before starting time and whispered, "I can get sahib room."

"Tell your Uncle Angus."

"No joke, sahib; can get room. Two rupee for me, two rupee for train man." That was $1.20 extra but since you don't pay for sleepers on Indian trains it sounded reasonable. "All right," I agreed, "that's great. But nobody gets even an anna until I'm in the room and locked in for the night."

The trick beard vanished in the mob and my boy rallied around with the idea of picking me out a nice clean slice of floor. Soon after, the long red train backed in and a short chap in blue came over with the one of the trick beard. They had some palaver in Punjabi and I was asked five rupees. More argument. At last the guard sorted out a key, undid a small glass case beside the train, whipped out a stamped and sealed card labelled "Captain John Hay," wrote on it "Chief Justice Sinclair" and ushered me into a two-room compartment bigger than seen in the average hotel.

"Lock door and window," the chap said. "When knock come, do not answer." That was okay by me and when Captain Hay or somebody came along he knocked and pounded in noisy fury, but I let him think the chief justice was a heavy sleeper and at last he went away as we rolled into the hot night.

Time being one of the many things which mean nothing to the home-town Hindu there was a clatter and uproar at every station along the route, so I got little sleep. About an hour before dawn

we stopped right in the plain and I could hear the jackals snarling nearby. People started running up and down the track and then the snap of rifle fire broke out, I opened the brown shutters on the window and could see the flash from rifles on a mud hill above the track.

Native passengers, all excited, commenced to tumble out chattering and my boy came back saying, "Dacoit, master, stay in." A dacoit is a hold-up. I slipped the magazine into my pistol, put on my shoes and went out. A dozen or so logs and some twisted wire that looked like old bed springs were thrown across the track. Obligingly enough a red light gleamed from the top of the pile, otherwise the engine might have plowed right through. After looking the whole mess over, the white engineer decided to plow through anyway and the engine easily pushed all the obstacles aside without derailment.

At Lahore, where Kipling's Kim started his wanderings, a special train was already on the siding waiting to go back and round up the bandits. The train robbers either got cold feet when the train stopped or were hopelessly rotten shots because not even a window got broken in the feeble little attack. The logs were a pretty weak bulwark too, so I thought that if this was the best effort of the gun toters I'd probably keep my appetite.

We steamed north all day long and the farther we went the more furious the people began to

seem. No more puny little weeds. Big men up here. Warriors; some with blue eyes. Tough babies. Every station was guarded by troops. At Taxicala 100 prisoners from Kashmir stood chained to a building. There had been uproar and mutiny in Kashmir. Each man was chained to the next one and to the wall itself. They seemed like a happy enough gang and chattered merrily among themselves.

Here were gun-toting civilians too with fat bandoliers of shells around their shoulders. At Rawalpindi, a great military base, the land of the Khyber really began. No fooling now. Great barbed wire entanglements around everything. Gun trains on the sidings; bombing planes in fields. Troops by the thousand. Most everyone got off there and we rolled on the next four hours quietly and emptily.

As we neared Peshawar we zigzagged through great yellow gashes of hill, crossed a river from Afghanistan and speeded up. As we passed the barb-wire gates of the cantonment flashes of light jumped out and quickly vanished again. I thought it was a bombardment but couldn't hear anything. Gradually as we went farther you could make out the roar of distant guns. The train ran into the station in silence. There were only two white passengers. Three soldiers stood by while I was tumbled into a cart and away we went to a fortified bungalow. It was in darkness. A coolie unlocked a big brass padlock and let me in. My boy fixed

up the bed and vanished like a frightened hare. All the windows were shuttered except one and through that one the lightning-like flash of distant guns spasmodically lit up the room. For me, who missed the war, it was an exciting night but it was only air force men at night bombing practice. Routine stuff.

In all the British Empire there is only one forbidden city. That's Peshawar, home of the wildest fighting men under the Union Jack. No unguarded civilian has been inside for eighteen months. Few white men live there.

A grim gray fort sprawls awkwardly on a hill facing the Khyber Pass. One side is the "cantonment" where white people may come and go more or less safely and unbothered. On the other side lies the teeming, throbbing native city. In between is a no man's land largely filled with water buffalo who wallow and splash about in the freshets which roar down from the Himalayas when it rains.

It's all a bit exciting just to prowl about the cantonment behind the triple rows of electrically charged barbed wire. Sentries all over the spot. The sentries walk behind brick walls which reach up to their necks. On top of the wall are stones about the size of a man's head so that a sniper out beyond the wire can't be too sure which is the moving man and which the stone.

Although police had assured me that under no

condition could I enter the city alone, I decided to have a try and see what happened. It was a pretty bad day because the Royal Air Force had been bombing nearby villages for two days and the Afridis were in ferocious mood. Fazli Wahia, crimson bearded Hadji of Turangzai, had his bloodthirsty red shirts within 12 miles of town and 6,000 British troops were at the " stand to " ready to fight it out. They're on the stand-to pretty often in the bad lands.

I roamed up the cantonment road past the barracks and the station. The barracks seemed untidy and falling into decay but they swarmed with troops. No Hindus here. They are puny chaps who die young. Sikhs here, Gurkhas from Nepal, Rajputanis and Punjabis. Most of the Sepoys are away. The Sikhs were swashbuckling meat eaters with great woven beards.

I noticed that each sentry, white man or brown, had his rifle chained around his waist and fastened with a bulky padlock. " Why the lock? " I asked my guard.

" The Shinwaris offer big rewards for captured British rifles," he said noncommitally.

" Sure, but Shinwaris don't come in here, do they? " " All time messing about," he said, " Do a man in every now and then. They used to 'op it with the rifle. We had them chained to the wrist first but they chopped the lad's arms off so now we strap 'em all around."

" Do they still get away with a few? " " Many's

a time, lad, many's a time. They carry away man and all."

With everything peaceful and quiet in here it all seemed a bit dreamy.

We strolled on past the station where another guard took me over. There were tents in the barrack yards near the station and these were marooned like islands but occasional troops were out among the tents bowing in religious piety and getting pretty wet at the job.

"What's in the tents?" I asked. "Gods" the chap said.

He was in the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry and didn't think too much of this game of shepherding a Yankee about. No matter how I assured him I was as British as he, he only snorted, "Hamerican" and stalked on morosely.

"What kind of gods?" "Blooming idols made o' mud," he said, quoting Kipling. "Elephants and monkeys and all. Them's temples, them is. Portable temples and pagodas and all. The blooming darkies cart 'em about with 'em. Won't go into a show without a word o' prayer with that there elephant."

"A show?" "Fights, me lad—battles."

"But this is headquarters. These barracks are hundreds of years old. Why not have regular temples?" "Oh, just another crazy idea. You see none of these 'ere temples or pagodas can ever be pulled down once they goes up. They become holy ground. Well, we beats 'em this

way. We don't want the place littered up with temples so we put up temporary ones."

We had come under the frowning turrets of the fort now and were just inside the cantonment wire. "Forbidden city" the guard said, pointing across. "Nobody allowed in since they did poor Murphy in."

"Who was Murphy?" "Chief of police 'e was, and a stout lad. Came a bit of a row in town and Murphy went in there. They picked him up by his feet and dashed 'is brains out on the road. A bad show that."

We came to a red gate through the wire. "You got a gun?" the guard asked. I showed him an automatic and he scoffed. "Gun I said, not a blooming toy." He was looking at the little .25 I'd bought in Bombay. I slipped back my coat and showed him a heavy holster, sporting an army .45 which had been loaned to me. "No civilians up 'ere. Show him that army gat and he'll take you for an officer. Then you can go through the first wire," the guard advised.

I walked smartly up to the sentry. He was a young lad with a red face. I showed the .45 and stepped through. Nobody joined me just here. I was alone in the Afghan no man's land; they thought I was an officer. I walked down the high road past the fort wondering if I dared take a chance on slipping right in to Peshawar.

Camel caravans were there with smelly loads of fur. Imagine a big fur market in India. The

caravaneers were picturesque Mongols. They looked part Eskimo, part Iroquois and part Jap. They gave me ferocious scowls. Some of the hill women cursed me soundly. They were magnificent women. Tall and big of hip with thick jaw bones and powerful teeth. Their eyes were sort of slanty and their arms long and sinewy like gorillas. Afridis, these, Afghans and Shinwaris. A few from Baluchistan. All carnivorous and strong. No wonder the men are fighting fools. They've got vigorous sex appeal to fight for.

The sentry at the second wire passed me through too. The wire was thicker here and strung on steel posts. I kept walking past the fields where the caravans had rested. Some had amazing collections of rugs. Beautiful things of camel hair from Tibet, Afghanistan, Hindu Koosh and Kashmir. I inspected them and finally a driver who spoke English came up to bargain. He spread out some beautiful embroidered linen table cloths at 75 cents. The price made my spending finger itch. There were Bokhara rugs for $4. Afghan rugs for $6. I could have bought skins to make myself a marvellous fur coat for about $19. They had beaver by the dozen, but I had always imagined Canada was the great beaver country.

I wanted to buy, but since I was already in forbidden territory and didn't know about getting out again, I kept plugging along. At the next bazaar I bought a leaded leather club and then, off to the right, I spotted a gate through the wall

into the city itself. The club had a comforting feeling.

Why not try it? I've always been lucky and I've got two loaded gats anyhow. If I can only get past this sentry. I sauntered over, and as the sentries—six here—put up their hands, I whipped back the coat, showed the big .45 said "Inspection" and passed through. It looked a cinch. The great colorful market-place of Central Asia was spread out there. I knew it would be unpleasant but well worth it. I thought I'd got away with it nicely when two guardmen popped along and said: "Your pass sir—you didn't leave it." "Pass; I'm on inspection."

I guess that was wrong. Anyway, they whisked me back inside the wire and before I knew it, I'd been marched back inside the cantonment again with the other protected souls. Oh well, I've had the bum's rush before.

This Peshawar, where I had come, is a wild place of laughing life, loose love and smouldering savagery. It has its famed "Street of the Story Tellers" and when caravans of love hungry men move in from Central Asia the woman bazaar does an uproarious thriving trade in the world's oldest but least respected profession.

The rock of bureaucratic bunk which separated me from a chance to mingle with the hypnotic tellers of tales was pushed aside by the chief of India's Frontier Constabulary. He stands six foot five and bears the name of Short. Minus the

usual letters of introduction I bore down on the Short Bungalow about lunch time, ignored the sign "Not at home" permanently fixed to the front gate, and ambled in to be viewed with excessive alarm by the 18 servants. White men don't prowl the streets of India at lunch time, the servants realized, so I must be a foul red shirt from over the mountains or one of those awful communist fellows. Perhaps I was a spy or a ghost or a zombie.

The darzi, or tailor, who sat cross-legged on the front porch, relayed my request to see the great white boss to the mali, who sent for the choukidar. A choukidar is an armed guard, who marches about your house looking for trouble and no North Indian home is complete without one. This chap, entirely surrounded by bandoliers, looked me over, decided I was harmless and told the head khitmagar, which is a butler in bare feet and whiskers. This lofty hash slinger looked on me with deep distrust and told the mistress who came out. She asked several questions and was followed by her man-mountain of husband.

"You want to go inside the walls?" he demanded. "Yes."

"Well, why?" "I have to go to the bank for money and I want to see this forbidden city."

"There is a bank in the cantonment." "All right, but can't I go in anyhow. They won't shoot me. Nobody ever shoots me."

"There's a show on up the line," he said.

"You mean the bombardment of the cave dwellers?"

"Yes, a bad business. You see no whites live in the city. These caravan chaps down from the hills are often told by mischievous troublemakers that their wives and families have been wiped out by British bombs up the line. When they hear this—usually untrue—they run mad, and if a white man happens to be nearby, they'll kill him for sure."

"But they haven't killed anybody for a long time." "For the simple reason that nobody has been allowed outside the wire—you carry a gun?" "Yes—I can get two."

"Know how to use them?" "I've been practising."

"All right; I'll try to get a couple of Sikhs. If they come by three o'clock you go. If not, you don't go."

That seemed reasonable, so I went back to my own bungalow—no regular hotel here—and when I got there the Sikhs were already waiting. One was meaty and broad with the exciting name of Alla Din. The other was a wiry chap with a thin nose and curly beard. He never said anything. The fat chap was the boss. They asked to see my guns and tried them. There was a harness shop nearby,—and they told me I'd have to get a shoulder holster like a gunman. I got the thing and felt like Billy the Kid or Jesse James. We

got into a car then and these chaps put their pistols on the seat between their knees. I had one on the hip and one in the holster and the safety catches were off. It looked like bad doings.

We rolled down the Mall with its line of officers' clubs and tennis courts and nurses out wheeling babies. It seems so silly to be loaded down with shooting irons. A couple of smart young girls went past riding horses and chipmunks played around the bushes. We drove into a brown building after a bit and the Sikh said: "This is Peshawar Museum—perhaps you would like to see." A museum! Of all things. "No," I said, "let's go. I want to see these wild men."

We joined the trunk road then, crossed a flooded river, slid through the three rows of wire, along a narrow strip of open ground and under the great stone arch into the forbidden city.

"This is Kiska Khani—Street of the Story Tellers," the Sikh said. I looked about and there were row after row of little shops crowded with men listening in absorbed attention to the wild tales of derring-do being unfolded by the story tellers. These are the wild and woolly he-men of the north, but they were a group of fascinated little gaffers under the magic spell of the yarn-spinner. Practically the whole street was made up of these small shops, and every one was crowded.

Most of the men who stared at me seemed annoyed, but far more surprised than angry. Here

and there somebody would scoop up a handful of mud and sling it at the car. One half-blind youth caught me a slap on the mouth with a lump of wet dirt, a girl tossed some pebbles at the windshield, but that was about all.

Whenever the goat herds, buffalo carts or camel caravans would clutter up the road and force us to a sliding stop in the mud, people would stand around and hurl insults at me. Apparently we were marauding sheep stealers. It was all like bad boys sticking their tongues out.

Once a group of Mongolian chaps slithered up street with amazing rugs on their backs. Beautiful things. Perhaps gorgeous is the word. I wanted to price the rugs, but the Sikhs wouldn't let us stop. They were nursing their guns between their legs, one looking left and one right while the driver looked ahead. I could see that if somebody took a snipe shot at me these birds were in for a bawling out.

"Plenty snipers around here?" I asked as we groaned through the silk bazaars in low gear. "We come to the place," the stout Sikh said. "See that radiator cap?" He pointed to a gash torn through the metal. "Last time we pass this way sniper cut cap in half. He may be better shot this time."

"Nobody ever shoots me," I repeated. "I'm lucky." We rolled around a corner into a crowded open-air barber shop.

Here we got out and went splashing around

until I was mud to the hips. Al, the gun toter, got some mud on his beard and it stuck out like a palm tree. After a bit of hoofing we came to a tribal drummer in patched coat of many colors who sat cross-legged beating out a tatoo of defiance.

In all the Arabian nights there was no picture to equal this seething, colorful mass of hard living men. You never saw a woman in the place but there were plenty of gaudily dressed children making mud pies beside the hoofs of water buffalo or camel or long haired ponies.

We joined a mob about the drummer. A patriarchal Mohmand, his beard dyed crimson, was howling the ballyhoo of a side show spieler. "Inside you men of the frontier. Inside you merchants and sons of merchants, the caravan of Utman Mangaldas will now be sold."

He pleaded and argued and joked in regular spieler style and gradually we were all pushed inside a rain-soaked compound where damp camels smelled as only a damp camel can smell.

The camels were tethered around the side of the wall. Out in the muddy middle, stacks of mysterious merchandise from the Himalayas were piled in great heaps.

"You'll have to stand back—don't go close," my guard warned. "All right—why?" He pointed to iron youths who had surrounded me. They all wore long hooked knives in their belts and gave me a look of smouldering distrust. I was the first

white person to crash a caravan auction in months, and they didn't like it.

The auctioneer got out in the centre and described the merchandise in the various bales. Mostly rugs or skins. Now and again the bundles were opened but no one was allowed a close inspection. They just bid on the bales blindly. All they knew was the reputation of the trader, the weight of the bale and the number of rugs it contained. Size, design or age didn't matter. All the rugs reeked of dirt.

As soon as a buyer would take a bale he paid for it in coin. No cheques in this frontier market; not even paper money, but ringing, clinking silver.

The cashier sat over a big stone and as the coins were handed to him he clinked each one merrily to see that it rang true. He had a big heap of money beside him in no time. Sometimes he got paid in gold which was all done by weight.

Bale buyers then took their loads across the compound and started an auction of their own where they sold off individual articles. Rugs brought prices to make the home town collector turn red down the neck. I saw a Bokhara in elephant hoof pattern, size 12 × 15 feet, go for $46. Thick Bokharas suitable for a small hall were about $7. I was anxious to step in and buy some of these Persian treasures but Din, the doughty dragoman, wouldn't allow it.

"You aren't wanted here. Neither you nor your money. These people have been taught for years that to kill an infidel means a sure place in paradise for them. Keep back here among the camels."

Nobody, however, had bothered me in the slightest. It was a noisy, smelly and picturesque band of cut-throats gathered for the primary purpose of barter and trade, after that came commercial amours with stout sirens. They weren't interested in murder just then. We stood in the deep mud while the bales gradually drifted into other hands. Then they sold donkeys and horses. The camels were all kept for the long return trek into the mountains.

We sauntered out of the compound later and through the leather bazaar. Long crooked rows of tiny stalls were jammed one on top of the other. Men sat cross-legged in each stall cutting out shoes, saddles, water "bottles", holsters, scabbards and lead-filled billies.

They were fast, tireless workers who seldom stopped to look up. One chap was having a dry shave while he worked. Another was having his hair dressed and piled on top of his head like a pompadour. The effect was topped off by a white comb. He had a happy but pockmarked face and fat legs. He looked up at me and grinned. "Salaam, sahib."

"Salaam," I said, surprised that any of these tough guys would speak to me.

"You like see something?" "Sure."

He waved the hairdresser away and took out a book of pictures. I thought it was the old Paris Postcard gag transplanted 10,000 miles but these pictures were shocking views of corpses smashed to pieces. Monstrous things. Most of the victims were tribesmen who had been tortured. One was hanging by his feet. They had pounded his feet to a red pulp with swagger sticks. Several were stretched out with their chests laid open. The hearts of some were lying cold and stiff on hairy chests. A bullet with a string on the end had been fired through the chest of another. They pulled a rope through after the string and hung the man who still lived by the rope in his chest. The birds pecked him and the sun baked him but he lived an agonizing hour or so.

"Men of the north do this to invaders," the pock-marked man grinned. I thought it time to be pushing along but he grabbed my arm, "Don't be frightened," he said soothingly. "Look up there."

I looked.

In a steel turret a machine gun was mounted. It pointed down into the square. "Nothing happens to you," he went on confidently, "except you buy some of these murder pictures in post card form."

That sounded like salesmanship with a threat but I bought the pictures and slithered away in the glue-like mud.

We rounded a bend under a big arch. There was a statue of King Edward there and beneath it the biggest open-air barber shop I ever saw. Men were having their hair cut and beards trimmed as they sat in the dirt. A few were being shaved. They smeared their faces with a pulpy mess made from over-ripe fruits which had been churned up like cream.

The houses around this square were ramshackle things of mud but very high. Each man tried to outgrow his neighbor. If he did, his women could go and sun themselves on the roofs, but if any man could look down on the roof and see the women unmasked they had to keep indoors all their lives or go out in a shaded litter carried by coolies.

We walked on past the copper bazaar where men were pounding away at odd shaped jardinieres and water jars. Near this spot a priest was nonchalantly lopping off the heads of goats and great flocks of fish hawks swooped down to drink the blood. All this hard living north country is Mohammedan and the Hindu diet is just a silly rumor from the south. Perhaps it isn't the meat which does it but here live broad chested, thick necked men of battle. In the Hindu south are puny little wretches who whine and live like mice.

Outside the city walls a bugle sounded, followed by a defiant wail of a pipe band. "We have to go now," the bodyguard said. It wouldn't do to be in here when the muezzin calls to prayer.

"Come on." I sprawled in the mud just before entering the car and left India's forbidden city a battered but delighted young globe girdler. Next day we started threading the adventurous path itself.

"This is the end of British India," the major said. "The Khyber Pass starts here and leads into Afghanistan. That mountain you see with the snow on top is in Russia. China is off to the right."

We were stopped among long haired camel caravans near Jamrud Fort, gateway to the most romantic, the most fought over and dangerous highway the world has ever seen.

An icy wind howled through the pass with its message of glaciers and snow drifts. A guard told us parts of the road had been washed out in torrential rains of the past two days. "You can use the caravan trail," the guard grinned.

Three of us were about to follow this twisting camel path between the eternal snows. Two Canadians and a Sikh. We knew that from the moment we pushed off our lives would be in danger. Hostile eyes would be looking down on us from caves up in the heights. But we carried heavy pistols and a chain of forts running the entire 32 miles of the pass would keep us under the observation of friendly khassadars all the way. Friendly, that is, if you pay them as the British government does for being good boys.

We rolled out into the wind. The highway was

a trim ribbon of concrete. Smooth as a boulevard but peopled by the wildest looking men I ever hope to see. Big Afridis and Shinwaris. Every man of them carried a rifle slung over his shoulder. The man without a loaded rifle up here is a corpse. What few women we saw wore Turkish harem pants, usually black, but occasionally red. They were not armed but barely strayed outside the gateways of their own "villages".

Every home and every village in this warrior land is a loop-holed fort with a watch-tower in the centre. The watch-tower is never left unguarded. We could tell that angry eyes were watching us from each of those towers. Hundreds of them stuck up heroically in tiny walled towns. There was a chunk of metal hanging near the towers and when an alarm sounds the sentry pounds this metal in noisy fury.

The wind was almost perishing as we sped through the pass. Higher and higher we climbed. Our ears commenced to tingle a bit. The brown rock wastes spread out below as if we were on a magic carpet. The snows of the Hindu Koosh and Himalayas grew closer. Highest mountains in all the world looking down on the road where no man dares move at night.

A caravan of 60 camels clumped quietly past. A whole village on the move. Out front on a short Chinese stallion was the chieftain, a hairy giant with a long rifle across his saddle. Two other armed men flanked him. Back farther, each

at the head of his own family, were the men of mountains. Each wore a pistol across his shoulder, a long dagger in his belt and a rifle in his hand. The women walked. The men rode horses. The camels, usually goaded on by sons of the clan, carried enormous loads. None of your puny Morocco or Egyptian camels these, but long-haired brutes from the highlands of Asia.

There was no friendly greeting for us as these merchants neared the end of their two or three-month trek. Just cold suspicion in a land where everyone is suspicious and the old rule "might is right" holds true.

Gradually we got into the flood lands. Great torrents had run down the hills for two days. These were almost dried up now but the road was washed out in some spots, rock-littered in others.

There were two roads through the pass. A picture of a car adorned one, a picture of a camel and a donkey marked the other. No use putting signs up here because the fighting merchants can't read. They don't know what a book or a letter is.

As the road got worse we had to swing into the camel trail. No place for a timid driver this. We twisted around incredible bends far up the mountain side. A cracked steering post here means pulverized death far, far below. But nothing cracked. The car purred gracefully. The major had a good grip on the wheel as we climbed higher and still higher.

At a great bend in the road stood a ruined two-

ton truck. Some ambitious Peshawar merchant had thought to go through in style and sell his wares in the Afghan capital of Kabul but the tribesmen picked him off and sacked his load. Having no use for the truck, they shot the tires full of holes, poured gas over the engine and let it burn. More routine stuff.

At the next bend was an abandoned gray fort and down in the valley the scene of a great battle won by Lord Roberts. Near this place was a burial ground of brown rock. Men were standing there around an open grave. They scowled suspiciously as we passed and I hoped the dead pal hadn't been picked off by the British. There were about 100 armed men in great long cloaks brooding silently over the open grave.

We dipped down a valley and climbed the heights again. Straight in front was another fort. It was the second farthest outpost in the British Empire and a thoroughly modern piece of fighting machinery. "This is half way through the Khyber," the major explained. "This fort holds both roads and can stand a long siege."

We were just going around the edge when a soldier, a Rajputani, feeling very important in his heavy, long great-coat put up his hand in the Mussolini salute.

We stopped and the major spoke to him in Urdu. It's a language that sounds like the bubbles of a boiling kettle. "They want me on the telephone," major said. "Come inside—see a real fort."

"Telephone?" I said. "Sure, good telephone service. For all I know you could call New York from here in the heart of the Khyber."

I followed the major inside. The guard, even in the shadow of a powerful fortress, kept watch over the car. The icy wind was perishing just here. I thought sure I'd get frost bite or at least chilblains even though I wore a heavy suit and overcoat. No wonder you need so much luggage in India. You have to face every climate of the world within a week of each other.

While speculating on the absurdity of freezing to death in India—or very near India—a pasty looking lieutenant came out to inspect the guard. White officers here but colored troops. I could see why he looked pasty. He was wearing flimsy cotton shorts. The troops were in heavy overcoats, but regulations drawn up by some brass hat in London, had the white officers come out in cotton shorts and there he was shivering like a leaf.

For two years this lonesome lieutenant had been in this fort with colored men who speak a different language and live a different life. What heartbreaking loneliness all for the purpose of guarding piles of icy rock. "The books call this a glorious outpost of civilization or some other rot about guarding the far-flung border lines of empire," the little fellow grinned.

"And what would you like?" "Me? You ask me? Well, mark this down—a blonde, age

24; champagne, age 10; a dinner as is a dinner; tickets for the show, two tickets, and afterwards moonlight." He had that distant, far-away look that comes from too much solitude. Suddenly he snapped out of it and demanded "But who the devil are you, sir? What are you doing here on the road to nowhere?" I couldn't resist a wise crack. I said "Believe it or not, Spike, I'm waiting for a street car."

Less than an hour later we were in Landi Kotal, heart of the tribal bad lands, last of Britain's outposts held, at this time, by the Gordon Highlanders.

This was the Afghan end of the Khyber Pass, a grim and forbidding fort in the flinty heart of the world's biggest continent where sniping is the favorite outdoor sport and fire brands, brigands, robber chieftains and other bellicose buccaneers are always ready to uncork a bombardment and rub out a few lives. Here the camel caravans stop for shelter, palaver, and shop talk on their ten week grind from Persia or Turkestan and white women are the things you see on magazine covers.

For entertainment the troops have all the excitement of button shining or tiddlywinks. After two years most of them are ready to chuck this army life and go in for lady's maiding. Being a cloistered monk or a prisoner in some damp ratty catacombs is pie compared to this nerve eating solitude.

Two miles further on is Minchni Kando, a ring of box-like block-houses looking down on the most

rugged panorama of this earth. I stood on the top peak of this last frontier and startled the goats and chamois by gleefully shouting "I'm the king of the castle and you're the dirty rascal." The air was electric; the wind icy; the view amazing.

Here were the three largest, wildest and most ballyhooed countries in the world to-day. India, Russia and China, the terrible trio of front page babies. Here is the great yellow menace, the challenge of communism, and all that sort of thing. They don't exactly touch each other because a tip of Afghanistan and a fringe of lawless tribal land unclaimed by any power, unmapped and unexplored stands between. Here is neither census, birth record, money, medicine nor schools.

A Sikh came slithering up the loose rock of the hill as I droned the dirty rascal piece. "Come lower," he insisted, "around this bend."

"All right—why?" "The last two men who stood on that spot were both shot dead. You're over the line. It makes trouble for me when people are shot." Always ready to oblige, I came down a bit.

There were five rows of barbed wire there, a red gate and five more rows of wire. Every peak sported a fort. On this side—which is not British territory—they are British forts. On the other side the Afghans have their snipers posted. The road which is good concrete all the way, swings into three parts here. Afghanistan left, Persia straight on, China to the right.

On Tuesdays and Fridays the wild hillmen get paid by England to behave themselves and caravans are allowed to pass through. Other days, well perhaps they can pass through, perhaps they can't. It all depends on how much "protection money" they pay. The racket is an ancient form.

This was Friday and the rows of camels, often a mile or more in a twisting line, came clumping down from the distant mists. The clouds were around our heads and British planes droned sleepily overhead.

If the planes feel sore about something they drop a few bombs and blow up the villages. If you ask what right they have to fly over another land and blow the people into the next world you'll get a variety of answers depending on who you talk to.

The British say, "Oh the beggars are massing together. They might attack us. We drop leaflets first telling them to break up or be broken up. If they don't disperse we bomb them. When they go into their lairs and caves we fly over their villages and blow these up. They've been warned."

In another breath the Briton will agree that none of these wild hillmen can read, so it's a bit hard to put things properly together.

As we stood there looking on this vast emptiness an official car came through, bound for Kabul where Nadir Khan is king and there are just three commandments. The British chaps marked a passport,

timed the car through and kept watch. The Afghan inspectors conducted a close search for liquor.

Here in the Himalayas is the strictest liquor law ever framed by living man. Anyone found with any alcoholic spirit of any kind any time goes to jail for six years without the option of a fine. Drastic if you get the idea. That's one of the few Afghan laws. Another says that no person shall go outside their homes between 10 o'clock at night and dawn. If you do you get shot. A third says that no woman shall ever anytime appear in public with her face uncovered.

We hung about this gateway to space until the guard grew a bit impatient. No one is allowed to start through the pass after 11.30 a.m. or to go back later than three. It was now lunch time so we had to turn away from the snow clad uplands of mystery and head for Peshawar.

As we passed Landi Kotal fort the lieutenant who had added himself to our party said, "Do visit the mess. The original home of the Khyber Rifles. There is a book there to sign." I signed and then went back through the pages to 1913 but no other Canadian had been in the mess during those nineteen exciting years. It gave me a bit of a jump.

"Do all visitors to Landi Kotal sign here?" "Oh yes—see here is Ramsay MacDonald, here is the Prince of Wales." He named off a long list.

The bugle sounded as a new batch of "Gay Gordons" took up their job of patrolling Britain's

farthest out-post and we started the exciting return trip through the Khyber.

It wasn't so cold going with the wind and we made good time. The whole down trip was under two hours but the caravans take two weary days.

We came once to a big well where women with black shawls over their faces were scooping up water in fat pot-bellied jars which they carried for miles on their heads. Sometimes the cloth slipped off their faces and you could see high cheek bones and proud red mouths. Most of them had one to three gold rings in their noses. The rings usually hung down from the inside.

A dozen men fingered their rifles at the top of the well as we sped by. They wore shaggy goat-skin jackets and camel hair toques. They had hard eyes of light brown or blue and wiry black beards.

These men were born and bred in the Khyber. They live to fight and plunder and kill. When they see what they want they take it and the best man wins. Somehow I hope they never tame these plundering cave men. They are proud courageous fighters strong enough to keep the world's biggest empire on the jump night and day and to ride on Britain's most expensive railway line with only a scowl for a fare. They hold that man's job is to keep his home from invasion and his women from violation and they do that well.

The toughest, costliest and crookedest railway in the world threads the jagged bad lands of Khyber. It sports one train which makes the India-Afghan-

istan trip once a day with a conductor who'd fall dead from surprise if any native paid a fare.

Nevertheless he goes carefully through every car and demands tickets. That's his job and it pays him well. His usual answer is a growl or a rifle pointed at his vitals with the curt demand, "Get out of here you runty little so and so or I'll drill you full of holes." Since the law of the Khyber is self preservation, he gets out.

Once in a while a conductor, being human, gets sore. He grows tired of making out a report, "no fares collected", and does a bit of firm investigating. His funeral the next day is usually well attended and the railway directors send flowers.

This is no "Believe it or not" gag. It's true. Hairy hard-boiled hillmen of the Himalayas wouldn't think of paying or getting on the train without their rifles. They own this harem scarem land and figure that if somebody wants to drive a railway through, that's okay by them, but to pay for a ride is something for puny plainsmen.

The Peshawar terminus of this road is a turreted gun-mounted fort. Every station is a fort and every bridge guarded by "pill boxes". The station was alert and active and clean on the days I ambled around.

There was a man there selling tickets. He sold one in 1930 and had the date all marked down. "Two white sahibs," he told me as though that explained everything.

The train stood ready hours before departure.

A smart all-steel train. Coaches were marked first-, second- and third-class but you can probably imagine how much this means to these tough babies who chew crow-bars and spit nails.

Against advice I decided to take a ride. I knew I couldn't go all the way through the Pass because that would leave me stranded in Afghanistan and it would be far healthier to be stranded in a cave full of cobras. I could, however, go on to the last official British fort.

I sauntered on the car trying to look like a tough bimbo with an itchy trigger finger. I had a full cartridge belt around my middle and a seven-shot automatic hung there but it was purposely empty. If the occasion popped up I'd probably never be able to get the gat in action before I was drilled like a sieve but it doesn't cost anything to look tough.

The stern-jawed hillmen eyed me curiously but not viciously. Their rifles, slung on straps across their shoulders, gave them a fiery appearance, but they were soft spoken and quiet. They hardly said anything. Many of them were long-bearded patriarchs which made me think this can't be such a tough spot after all. The real bad guys never live to be old.

The train pulled out right on the dot. It was about half full and included two meaty-looking Yorkshire officers bound for Landi Kotal. I was in a big compartment with two Afghans. They looked like brothers and were childishly excited

about the electric fan in the car. They kept turning it on and off in fascinated pleasure. Then one chap poked papers into the whirling blade. Soon he got the thing gummed up and started out to fix it with his knife. I wanted to say, "Hang on there boy or you'll short circuit the works," but couldn't speak a word of their lingo. Sure enough there was a blue splutter and out went the lights.

We were threading one of the 32 tunnels in the run and the tribal chaps grabbed their guns in business-like dismay ready for whatever was coming next. It was dark and damp in there and I figured this was the pop off for Sinclair. As we swung into the light I tried to act very nonchalant and read a paper.

Still fingering their guns the chaps looked from me to the fan and back to me again. We swung into another tunnel. Nothing happened except a bumper crop of goose pimples down my neck. When we came out this time I faced the puzzled plunderers and said "What's the idea?" They didn't know what I said of course. They didn't answer either. But they did sit down. Don't get the idea I was a bold brave bucaroo telling these hill billies where to get off at. Nix on that. I was scared but there wasn't much point in showing it.

We ran into a tiny fort with machine guns up in steel turrets. A Ghurka from Nepal manned the gun. I never saw the conductor. Just here was a wide plain between the distant mountains.

We weren't really into the Pass yet. The plain looked peaceful enough.

One more chap, an old fellow in an outfit like an eiderdown comforter, came on with a big, hooked stick in his hand and a rifle strapped over his shoulder. He didn't speak to anybody but looked at me continuously. He hardly took his eyes off me. At the next station I got off and stood on the platform. As the train started away again I stepped forward to get on again and then thought better of it. Enough is enough. I'd been warned not to go and if somebody did try a pot-shot at me it would be bad business.

I had to walk across a rock-strewn field to reach the caravan road. We were still inside British territory although outside the fort zone. I managed to pick up a tonga and rode back to Peshawar where I found out a few things about this trick railroad.

It was started in 1879 and stopped when the Afridis, self-appointed kings of the Khyber, swooped down and massacred the builders. In 1908 another attempt was made under strong guard but the Shinwaris roared down this time and picked off all the workers. Then in 1919 British diplomacy triumphed when they hired these very tribesmen to build the road themselves. They did it. Made a fine job and get paid for protecting it to-day. It's a triumph of engineering under difficulties.

"We don't care whether they pay for the ride

or not," an officer told me. "The road was built for military purposes and is in good repair. We can rush troop trains right up to the Afghan border in one hour if we need to, so why bother collecting a few rupees in fare at the expense of further enraging these hillmen?"

FRONTIER MONKEY BUSINESS

THE most restless man in the world, the man with the oddest job on earth, and the globe's goofiest golf course all squat among the black foothills of Afghanistan and if you're interested in freaks just step up and look them over.

First, his Highness the Maharajah of Kashmir, who suffers from the jungle jitters. He's Hindu prince of a Moslem state and knows that some time, some day, a furious subject will fall on his neck and open his veins. He never sleeps two nights in the same place. Seldom in the same town. He never eats or drinks anything anywhere until his trusty taster has tried a sip first. He's a walking delegate for that whiskered platitude, "heavy hangs the head that wears a crown."

While I was in Delhi this sultan with the shakes rolled in with his attendant yes-men, a truck-load of wives and his ration of food and drinks; set up a chattering harem right next to my room and personally pushed off for quieter bedding quarters. It all seemed pretty crazy to me to see this high hooper dooper of the Himalayas journey two weeks for a one-night stand in the capital, but to-day as he neared home the rajah nervously

admitted his conviction that one of these days a knife will bury itself in his heart.

Now meet human bed bug food. No joking, it's the truth. There are men in India who get themselves eaten alive by bed bugs every night of the year. They do it deliberately. It's their job and it pays fairly well.

No Hindu will kill any animal, bird or reptile under any condition, anywhere. That's because they believe you and I and the iceman come back to this world as some other being after we die and by killing a mouse or a monkey they may be killing Aunt Susie's little Willie who died young.

The most orthodox of all Hindus, the Jains, go farther and refuse to kill even an insect. These are the chaps you'll see running around town with a brush dangling from their belts. Every time they go to sit down anywhere they first gently brush the ground or chair or bench to make sure there are no bugs there they could crush or maim. When satisfied there are none they sit down a bit gingerly.

But everyone travelling in India, whether he's the viceroy or the lowliest of all untouchables, is certain to pick up bed bugs, fleas, lice or crabs sooner or later. Not even a master magician could possibly miss them. You and I get rid of them quick. Once the Jains hitches in to a flea or so he cherishes them. They might be Uncle Jim come back to say hello.

But the wealthy Jain—some are millionaires—

likes his sleep the same as you and I do. He can't sleep very well in a bed filled with vermin and he won't drive them away. So he hires a low-living fellow-fool to sleep the first hour or so in his bed until all the bugs have drunk their fill of warm, red blood, and then he rolls in for the balance of the night. Naturally the bugs grow fat and breed mightily on a steady diet, but that can't be helped. The only relief is to hire a couple of bed warmers and let the blood-drinkers feast on them.

And now take a look at the only golf course on earth where you carry a loaded pistol instead of a niblick. Where there are army pill boxes instead of bunkers and where an armed guard watches every stroke you make like an umpire.

Beyond Peshawar are the vast plains and hills of Afghanistan and Thibet. The last great home of marauding males who'd far sooner fight than eat. Peshawar itself is surrounded by high stone walls. Inside that again is a triple line of electrically charged barbed wire, flood lighted at night and patrolled by sentries every 30 yards. All the white people live inside the wire, which is sealed tight at 6.30 in the evening.

The golf club lies outside the wire. A regular 18-hole course. Completely surrounding the place are armed Sikhs. Alert, hard-boiled killers these. Crack shots, heartless, swanky, courageous. Inside the links, at strategic points, are concrete pill boxes with machine guns. If you happen to be a timid player your score is liable to be a bit off

here because the Afghans delight in plowing up the green with a bullet just as you're about to drop a ten-foot putt.

The 19th hole, inside the wire, echoes to amazing alibis. "Would have had a par three on that 14th green if some fool hadn't taken a shot at me." "Why, that's nothing. Look at me reaching the third green in two and then just when I line up the putt that machine gun starts to bark. Dashed nuisance this."

It's all a bit incredible as if you're walking around in a fog. With evil eyes looking down from some rocky lair the players, many of them women, go on pitching and putting as if it was a pleasant little course in England. Nobody, in fact, has been shot for five whole months. Wonderful record. The handicap chart will have to be revised unless somebody gets popped off soon.

Peshawar also wins the sawdust flavored soda biscuit for the goofiest shop and sidewalk signs on earth.

Any number of merchants along this fighting frontier proudly hang out the shingle, "Adda Din Khan, wine merchant, failed B.A." They want to let you know they went to college and while they didn't manage to make the grade that was just tough luck.

Here's a doctor shouting in four-foot type: "Cheapest doctor in town; guaranteed cure for old age." His name, something like Singh Gow

Allapuj, is followed by a string of degrees from mail-order colleges. He does a thriving trade. Anybody who guarantees to stop old age deserves big business.

Buses, in place of signs, use pictures, because the natives can't read. If you want to go to the bathing ghat you take the car with the sign of the leopard. If you live near the burning ghat you take the car with the sign of the buffalo.

Near the Mall is a big shop where they got the signals twisted. Their slogan is: "Buy here once and you'll never come back." It's been up there for years but nobody bothers about changing it.

Even drinking fountains have their trick get-ups. Here's a fountain "fit only for Hindus". Here's another "suitable for Mohammedans to drink".

Every white woman in India has a sign firmly and permanently fixed to her front gate which says "Not at Home". You might want to see Mrs. Gregory Gandhi some afternoon and drive around for a pot of tea. She'll probably be playing tennis on the lawn, but the front gate sign will tell you in no uncertain tones that she doesn't want to see you even if you're going to give her a million dollars.

Dentists scribble their prices all over walls. "I repair any tooth for two rupees." "I went to American college. All my teeth are gold."

Here's an amateur dentist whose sign reads:

"Abdul Lal Singh, first-class tooth carpenter. Bridges built. My brother is B.A."

Doctors vie with each other for low prices. One in Rawalpindi says: "Babies safely brought, 4 rupees" ($1.20), while the next man down the road says: "My babies never die; safe birth guaranteed, only five rupees. Boy babies one rupee bonus." This sort of transaction, however, is cash in advance.

The largest gas station on the frontier says this: "Petrol per quart 1.8 (42 cents), per gallon 6 annas (12 cents)." Several people have demanded gallons at six annas and got them. Still the merchant does not change his sign.

The main streets in frontier towns are invariably London copies. Peshawar has Pall Mall, Charing Cross, Oxford Circus and Piccadilly. Rawalpindi has Hyde Park and Leicester Square.

Up in Bara Fort certain rooms are elaborately labelled "Men Only", but no woman has been within ten miles of the place in years. The nearest railway station is 29 miles away, but a big sign hopefully directs the traveller, "This way to the trains". All the traveller has to do then is pick up a machine gun and march under snipers' noses across the plains for a couple of days. Then he'll see the train.

Hotels tell you where to send your servant for tea or toast or whatever you want. If you should happen to drop in without a servant some won't rent you a room. "Wouldn't dare," they say.

"The hotel is for sahibs. All sahibs have servants."

And how they have servants! Take a $75 a week merchant or army man, his servants number fourteen and he has to pay and feed them all. You'd expect that in the ordinary home fourteen servants would fall all over each other and have nothing to do. Well, perhaps they would, but Indian domestic establishments are certainly not ordinary homes. The cook, for instance, wouldn't be bothered washing his pots and pans. Incredible! Unheard of!

Likewise the lady's maid would never wash out a pair of stockings. Ridiculous! She'd quit first. So here is the list of servants you face if you live in India and have your own home: Bearer (valet), ayah (lady's maid), darzi (tailor and dressmaker), head khitmagar (butler), second khitmagar, mashelgi (dish washer), kahausamah (cook), mati (cook's helper), dhobi (laundryman), mali (gardener), coolie (gardener's helper, sweeper), chowkidar (night watchman), one groom for each horse, and a chauffeur. Over and above all this is a head man, usually called an orderly. There is likewise a white governess for the child—if any.

But we've rather drifted away from signs. To swing back in that general direction, read the Delhi Golf Club advice, "Beware of Snakes in Bunkers", or the Peshawar Club's trite reminder, "During summer time guards will not be on duty during

mid-day hours. Players must re-enter the cantonment wire when the whistle blows."

Some day some official will put up a sign in the jungle, "Beware of Tigers", and then British efficiency will be complete.

THE LIVE-FOREVER MAN

LAHORE, the Punjab capital, lay south across the great plains and below that the Ganges; so I bid good-bye to the keepers of the Khyber in an icy pre-dawn mist. Just before starting away from the street of the sixty spooky cemeteries the sun popped up over China and gleamed like a million diamonds on the ground frost.

I knew that by nightfall we'd pass through temperatures of 100 or more, but that didn't help as I stood shivering in riding gear and overcoat. The last I saw of the frontier was a slim blonde captain, who stands lonely guard amid a battalion of Gurkhas, drilling his Nepalese killers with machine guns. We rolled out across Khajuri Plain as I wrapped myself in blankets and tried to sleep.

Morning went by in drab monotony. It gradually warmed up as the Himalaya snow fell farther and farther back. I slipped off the overcoat. After the world's worst lunch in a lurching dining car I got back into my own room and slipped off some more. This was the India as folks at home know it. We were in a jungle land station. The hyenas were barking on the outside and there were

hundreds of green parrots with long tails and voices like the scrape of dull razor blades. I was just half-way awake. A balmy looking Hindu with shifty eyes pried open my window ready to steal whatever he could spot, but I caught him a clip over the mouth with a towel and locked the window.

It was probably four in the hot afternoon when we stopped in the open country. I looked out the window casually and then went on with a nice juicy murder I was reading. From outside came a wail. A high-pitched scream.

Doors began to open and slam again. More wails. People running through the long elephant grass. Still more wails. I looked out. Nothing to see but a gradually growing crowd of running men with their shirt tails out. All Indians from barber to banker have their shirt tails out. The wail up front took on an organized chanting now and they backed the train up. By this time 500 people had gathered. They just seemed to pop up from nowhere in the bamboo lands, like ants or flies.

I got out and walked ahead. A small cow, with the blue beads of the temple still around her neck, was dead in the ditch and the white engineer was calmly chewing grass while infuriated Hindus called him every name invented.

"What's up?" I asked. "Bounced a holy milker," he said. "They go on this way. If I'd killed a man it would be nothing. But now there'll be a proper fuss."

He stood there chewing the grass while wide-eyed Punjabis and a few hillmen salaamed before the dead cow. The priest, in white leggings, came loftily through the crowd and everybody bowed and got out of his road. That is all except the dozen white people whom he swept with one contemptuous look as he passed. He wrote down a lot of dope in a little book and barked in Urdu. Some men made a bamboo litter quickly and others scattered in the fields to find cow manure. They came back with lumps of it and patted it into cakes. They piled what was left of the holy heifer on to the litter, spread it around with manure cakes and then set up a high tenor chant as they carried the cow head-high through the jungle to the village burning ghat. Some sects burn the holy beasts with the same ceremony as they burn a man and keep a bit of the carcass to be tossed in the Ganges.

There were hisses, insults and a few rocks hurled at the train as we rolled south again and at the very next station we hit a man.

It was a tiny station. Ordinarily no stop, but the death of the holy heifer had to be reported at length. All platforms in India are surrounded with walls and it costs two cents to get inside. A blind beastie—that's a chap who walks about sprinkling roads from a goat hide filled with water —wanted to come in. The guard held him out and there was a fine uproar at the gate. He insisted on coming in, threw all his puny weight on the guard and crashed through. Then with his

gaunt arms stretched out before him he approached the standing train pleading for food.

"Go back," a guard shouted. "You'll fall under the train."

"Food," he whined. "Rice for a dying man. Food, I say."

He kept coming forward in a halting way. A boy, laughing about it, turned the old man slowly so he faced the gate again. He started that way but realized he's been fooled and turned around. The guard sent for a cop. When this imposing hooper dooper arrived he looked scornfully at the beggar and stalked away.

"He'll fall under," the guard exclaimed. "Who cares?" the cop snapped.

The old man was coming forward again right for my compartment. I would have got out and sent him back myself only the same boy, still laughing, turned him around again. About 200 people were watching this little drama of life.

The old man became furious and just as he had crashed the gate in the first place he now got up and rushed forward to knock his latest tormenter down. The train started away and he lurched with a bump into a moving car. He bounced back like a ball and lay very still in the dust while the observers stood around refusing even to help this blind untouchable to his shaky legs. I heard afterwards that the last flickering spark of life had run out there but we didn't stop.

You smell Lahore itself before you get there.

I'm fooling you, too, by saying it's a beautiful smell of orange blossoms.

A hotel flunkey keen to work me for a tip seized my stuff shooed me out of the station by a speakeasy gate which landed me ankle deep in red water. After slushing through this I came to the main gate of the station and there stood a youth of 20 or so nude as an egg. "Well, well," I said, "it's Addison Simms of Seattle." He put his hand over his eyes and made some noise like a gargle.

I looked around for the flunkey and a bunch of women in purdah came down the worn, wooden steps. Purdah in Turkey or Morocco or Algeria means a flimsy crepe veil thrown across the faces of virgins, a swath of towel over the mouths of mothers. Here a veiled woman looks like a meaty ghost in a gas mask. These wore enormous white robes trailing in the dirt. The piece over the face blocked out the faintest hint of a glimpse.

I chortled at the contrast. Nude man, tent covered women. At that moment one of the long smocks caught in the step and the woman came tumbling down like a baby elephant in a mainsail. Part way down she crashed another and they kept on screaming and bumping to the bottom. Nobody hurried to pick them up.

That would have been violation. The veil had slipped off the face of one. She was a toothless old orang and chattered like a baboon. But no wonder they chatter. I had to stick around the

station to get departure times and when I finally got away they were still yelping.

Unless you've travelled in this loco land of lotus lice and loincloths you can't believe the wearisome hocus pocus you have to go through to get anywhere. You book reservations and luggage, carry food, water and bed, trot around with a wash basin, two or three sets of togs and everything else except a spare spark plug. You turn purple in the face while acrobats pick up your best four dollar shirts and pound them to pieces on great jagged rocks and the buttons fly. That's called laundering and gives a shirt two months of life.

You discover ants eating your shoes and leather luggage. You need a general aide de camp. He pilfers and robs at the slightest chance. You keep everything locked up all the time and never pay any merchant what he asks for anything. You buy bottled spring water and discover it's bootleg stuff, reeking with typhoid cholera, dysentery and malaria germs. The shredded flesh you eat as "lamb" is ancient goat. The "beef" is buffalo. The "pork" is usually camel, although it's sometimes wild boar, which is worse.

All crazy as a coot but so mixed up that days slip into weeks before you get it sorted out. Money melts like snow. The bearer is continually popping a book in front of you filled with weird hieroglyphics. The little souvenirs you buy to take home disappear. There's always some bland,

whimpering excuse and one more cavity in the bank roll.

When I got up to the Lahore hotel I learned that my third servant had been gypping me right and left so I fired him. He threatened to have me in court, to gouge my eyes out, to poison me. Finally he threatened to put scorpions in my bed. I drove him away but probably should have had him locked up as a madman.

Then I headed up toward the bazaar. There was a big red gate drawn across the entrance to Lahore's market of filth and the sign "Plague". I skirted around the place and saw them loading bodies in bullock carts for the funeral pyres. There were about seven between two carts, with children around wailing and sobbing. Some of the women were crying too. I watched a young woman of twenty or so crying fit to die. Some other woman came up and slapped her a stinging wallop across the mouth just for crying. She cried all the harder so the older woman got a whip and lashed the younger one unmercifully across the back until police stopped her.

"Mother India" presents a horrifying picture of this Lahore bazaar and it's more than true. Narrow streets jammed with bulls and boobs, camels and kids, dogs and disease. Often the bullock carts and slobbering buffalo crowd you into filthy shops which line the alley. There is an open sewer on both sides. Gashes are cut in most buildings and from high up the filth of a city

seeps down the walls and by slow stages into the drain.

Around the shops, men sit making candies. Some have boys or fans there driving the flies away but usually they let the flies feast. The sewer oozes past and the dirt of buildings crowded beyond endurance slides slowly down the walls, often touching the candies which are raised a bare inch or so off the ground.

I gradually got back to the open mall and headed for fresh air in the mango groves. There were hundreds of green parrots screaming about and the heat made breathing hard, but I sprawled there in the grass absorbed in the flow of people along the road. Picturesque strugglers, all of them, licked before they start.

From nowhere, behind me, a mongoose darted past. They have mongoose in most of the parks to keep the snakes down. There was a dried up drain pipe about two yards in front and the mongoose popped in like a shot from a gun and soon came out again dragging the head of a small snake. Good old mongoose!

In all jungle lands twilight is unknown. Darkness comes like the switch of a light. It came as I sat there in the park, so I got up and roamed back to the bungalow, picked up a lamp and started to my own quarters.

On the way I met a nameless miracle man of mystery from Mysore. The most amazing man of all India.

He eats snakes alive. He drinks carbolic acid. He swears nobody can kill him and if you cut his head off it will grow on again. Cobras are his specialty. He finishes off a live cobra by a glass of nails and a couple of cigarette tins. When he eats rice, he consumes plate and all.

He can drink sulphuric, nitric and carbolic acid one after another without feeling them and if you don't believe me—as you probably don't—drop a line to scientific chiefs in Bombay or Calcutta and ask about this lad: his name is Rao.

Attempting to prove that he is immune to all worldly perils, including the peril of death, Rao came from Mysore jungles and gave shows in Bombay, Delhi and Lahore attended by scientific leaders and ordinary viewers-with-astonishment like me. In all palavers he urged people to shoot him with any weapon of their choosing, loaded by themselves. Nobody took him up.

"I am life," he sobbed in Urdu. "I live for all time. Nothing, anywhere, anytime, can harm me. Come, give me vitriol; give me carbolic." A bearer hands him the acids. The scientists are invited to inspect and see that it's the real stuff. Then the wild man downs it like it was a dry Martini.

Fascinated and unbelieving, I watched this man for an hour while he coaxed and pleaded with people to shoot him.

"No trick," he chanted. "No trick. I sign paper beforehand." But nobody would shoot

although two or three offered the mystic the use of a loaded gun if he cared to publicly blow his brains out.

All the usual things that kill men were gone through with. He ate whole boxes of tacks, dozens of razor blades, fists full of nails, a pint of finely ground glass. He let a cobra bite him four times and then picked the thing up for careful scientific analysis under microscopes.

The analysis showed a complete and active set of poison fangs.

"Good; then watch," the fellow said. He leaned down as the cobra pounced again, picked him up and calmly, deliberately, chewed off the tough head and ate it down.

"I am supreme," he screams. "I am the master of death. My death or your death. I can teach all men everywhere to live forever. They neither grow old nor gray nor withered. They stay like me. Now, to-day, and for all time. There is but one fear in all this world. The fear of death. I conquer it. I have no fear."

The scientists were flabbergasted and I was absorbed. There must be a trick in it somewhere, but if these big wigs of the laboratory can't spot it, what chance have I?

When the show was over the live-forever man sipped tea and ate chocolate eclairs while women fussed around him and wanted to know about keeping young. It was a long time before I could horn in for my little say and then I found

the chap shy and bashful as a lad trying his first kiss.

He all but put his finger in his mouth and whined, "I dowanna. No I dowanna tell." All he would say was, "Yoga, sahib. Yoga saves all, cures all. This kind hathayoga."

"Teach me." "Make sahib sick at first." "Never mind, let's try."

We got out in the garden and he sat me cross-legged on the ground. Then he brought out a funny looking clock. A sort of string ran across the clock every so many seconds. I was to breathe in exact time with the clock at the same time swaying back and forth on my hips. I tried it and was soon dizzier than a platinum blonde. Everything began to whirl and twist and I thought I was probably crazy anyhow, so stopped it. The bearded Rao wasn't surprised. "But some day world will build a pathway to my house," he smiled. "Because this world loves to live."

The mystery man hurried back to the admiring women who wanted to do things about shapes and wrinkles.

THE FIRST COBRA

HARTALS are one of those balmy bits of behavior by which home town Hindus show that they're mad at the government; and one of these hartals broke loose during my second day in Punjabi's capital.

Two hundred silk-swathed women were stretched out in the red sun. They looked like corpses when you were a block away, but when you got close they were seen to be chattering like 'teenage girls. These were Mahatma Gandhi's feminine shock troops. Their contribution toward the cause of Indian independence was to spot a shop handling British goods, sing "The Wearing of the Green", the battle ballad of independent India and lay down around the door so that nobody could get in or out without stepping on them. Men tried this dodge at first, but bellicose Britons did walk on the men so the female shock troops added this prostrate picketing to their other duties such as shooting governors.

It all looked pretty silly to me, but police were viewing the show with alarm while traffic was held up and photographers bustled busily about. Even the holy heifers were held up in their march through the bazaars.

The shop which had drawn the rage of the Gandhi picketers was a smart-looking spot handling cloth. It was one of the few in the crowded alley with a show window and in the window were the gaudiest and noisiest looking pyjamas I ever saw anywhere. Imperial purple, cloth of gold and crimson. Boy, what crimson; like pigeon blood rubies! I decided to go and buy the noisy nighties to see if it really meant bedlam in the bazaars.

I crowded my way through the spectators while Hindus howled and Moslems murmured. Men were unwinding their turbans and putting three-cornered Gandhi caps in their place to show that they were very mad because Mr. Gandhi was still in jail.

I started to pick my way past the women. Most of them sat up and bayed. This made it easier because there was a place to step when they sat up. Two clutched at my bare knees—I was wearing shorts—and one hit me on the shin with a drinking cup, but otherwise the attack was without incident.

I jumped the one high step into the shop where the boss and his two sons tried to hurry me out again. "No, sahib. Don't come in," he pleaded. "If I serve Englishman they burn my shop."

"I'm not English. Let's see the scarlet sleepers."

About a thousand brown eyes were peering into the dark interior of the shop. The boss hurried out and announced to the crowd in delighted tones

that I was not English. I may have been French, or German or Portuguese. That didn't matter. So long as I was not English they seemed childishly delighted, so I bought the noisy nightshirts and when I went out again the women, who still sprawled there, rolled aside to let me pass.

There was the makings of a first-class riot in the crowd, so I stuck hopefully around on the outskirts. More and more police gradually drifted up the street. Orange, green and white flags; the Gandhi colors, popped out of mysterious corners and were hoisted aloft on rickety buildings. The boys were showing that they were pretty mad about something.

Then a few white police on bicycles came up, looked over the situation, sent for a big truck and started nonchalantly loading the feminine shock troops aboard. There wasn't the slightest resistance by spectators. Police just grabbed the women and pushed them into the big van while the scrawny men stood around. A few of the women showed enough spirit to kick and splutter a bit, but it was all pretty feeble as a demonstration of rebellion or defiance.

I picked my way down through the bazaar again. Men were standing about with their mouths open, wondering what it was all about. An Indian bazaar is a very bad spot to stand about with your mouth open.

I passed the white portals of a bank and remembering I was broke drifted in to draw some

cash. It was a funny bank; crowded to the roof with men shaded from light chocolate brown to ebony black wearing everything from Persian fur hats to Morocco fezzes. Along one end were the tellers' cages with babus sitting cross-legged on their desks with iron boxes of money beside them. What with the steel-barred cages and the half-nude clerks sitting up on desks they looked exactly like apes begging peanuts.

It took a half hour to draw some cash, during which time I went from one head man to another and signed about 90 certificates. When I pushed into the bazaar again the whole atmosphere had changed. In place of open-mouthed amazement there was cold and calculating Indian rage. Some leader had popped up with stern ideas in his head and the mob were getting themselves into a fine stew.

All traffic was moving away, deeper into the bazaar. Nothing was coming down except the rumble of the distant drums. I went up with the ever-increasing mob. There were shouts and curses from up forward. A boy in a high window squirted a broad stream of ink down my neck. I turned to see what was up and someone threw down a lighted sheet of paper. This missed me, but brought a circle of leering men around. Skinny runts for the most part, but lots of them. They were mighty unfriendly. One pushed in close and grabbed at my parcel. Another stood off and tossed balls of wet, gooey mud at me.

From up in the crowd a tonga came through with bells clanging. A tonga is a little two-wheeled cart used instead of a taxicab. There were two mem-sahibs (white women) in the tonga with several hundred long-legged boys rushing after them and pelting them with rotten fruit, balls of mud, broken crockery and sticks of sugar cane.

One of the women was crying excitedly and wiping filth from her eye. The other was urging the driver to go faster and holding her purse part way open so that I saw the butt end of a small pistol there. The police were nowhere about. I couldn't see hide nor hair of a single one.

The women came to a circular corner with roads leading off in three directions and had to stop. Swarms of men blocked every alleyway. A boy hurled a piece of sewer tile and caught one of the women on the shoulder. Another hit the driver with a stone. He fell smack out of his seat to the ground and the horse, turning around excitedly, knocked two men down. Meantime, I was approaching the women unmolested. People were yelping but the shower of bricks stopped. Just as I reached the women two more white men approached. One had a pistol.

The three of us stood there with drawn weapons —mine wasn't loaded, and tried to look heroic. Probably we didn't because I, for one, was half expecting a broken head.

Soon thousands of bare-footed men came running pell mell down the road with the police in

pursuit. It was one grand and glorious scurry for cover. A motorcycle with siren whining led a police van and then there were two big cars. They loaded us five whites into a car and pushed us along to our hotel. When I got there Mahatma Gandhi almost gained a recruit for the loin cloth division because thieves had raided the Sinclair sea-going satchel and decamped with suits, shirts and socks.

The bungalow was littered like wreckage after a hurricane. Handkerchiefs, shoes, malaria pills, razor blades, books, pyjamas and letters from home cluttered the concrete floor. The mirror was cracked; a pair of shoes had been slashed with a razor and the lock cut out of my pigskin bag.

I knew whom to suspect and sent for the police. A slender Sikh in a pea-green turban limped in. "Detective," he said, fingering his curly beard.

I commenced to tell him all about things, but he stopped me with a wave of his hand and compiled page after page of notes without asking a single question. He found a steel box belonging to the suspected servant, broke the lock and discovered two shirts and three ties that had once been mine, a dagger, two turbans, a lead-loaded billy, some capsules, a piece of tiger skin and letters.

The letters gave a Lahore address so the hairy Hawkshaw went away while I opened a can of sardines and sat there munching in the debris.

Soon a meaty white officer who bulged out of

his silvery uniform came around. "Whence did you get your bearer?" "In Delhi!—he's the second one. The other's in jail."

"You do pick the rogues, don't you?" "They're all bandits," I said.

"And I dare say you pay him far too much," the law went on. "Did you know that a first-class constable here gets $15 a month?"

"No, I didn't know. But to-morrow morning I have to see the viceroy in Delhi and I have no trousers."

"That's nothing," he grinned. "Half the people who see the viceroy have no trousers—Gandhi met the King in a diaper and a safety pin."

He looked around the room and went away. It was four o'clock. By five most of my kit lay neatly piled on the bed. I didn't know who brought it because I had gone out, prowling in the bazaar, but there it was, back again all safe and sound.

At six o'clock the white inspector came back. "Your boy has a police record," he said. "You owe him money, don't you?"

"Yes—two weeks' pay."

"I think he'll come here for it. We will have two men waiting. If he shows up just before you leave we'll have him."

It was a bit exciting sitting there waiting. The boy bandit had promised to kill me, among other unpleasant things. The sun went down with a bang and a mongoose scampered along the verandah

looking for his evening meal of snake heads. Eagles chattered. Three bearded black heads appeared at a back window and stared inside. I asked what they wanted and each man produced a book full of testimonials to say what perfectly priceless fellows they were. "Master sahib lose bearer: I be new bearer. Very good bearer," they sang out.

One by one I asked these three in, only to discover 20 more at the front. Some of them had crimson beards, one had whiskers of imperial purple. One was practically naked. Each one kicked off his shoes and came in with his book of words.

Some of the credentials looked pretty phoney to me. There were men signing themselves "mister" for instance. Who on earth signs a letter "Mr. George Whosis"? I wondered at this, but said nothing. Soon the same name appeared again, so I kept a close watch and discovered that there were only four books of recommendations among those 20 dirt-caked applicants and they were farming them out between each other and giving me the run around.

I kicked the whole lot of them out, closed the door and opened some more sardines because there was no diner on the down train and no peanut boy runs through the cars in India.

A knock came. "Come in." A ferocious looking Mongolian type walked in. A bony brute with a bulldog jaw and a close-cropped head. He

was clean shaven, bare-footed and armed with a broad, hooked knife. A Gurkha; one of the toughest fighters of all India.

He salaamed and presented a note. It was undoubtedly the work of a sidewalk scribe, and said, "Honored and most respected sir; hearing that you have suffered the grave misfortune of losing your bearer, I most humbly submit the following as reasons why I should be engaged in his place. . . ." The note detailed accomplishments all the way from jiu jitsu to pancake making and was signed "A Naranjee".

"Did you write this?" "Yes, sahib."

"Wrote it yourself?" "Yes, sahib."

"All right, if you can write it again I'll hire you."

I handed him pen and paper. He had an excuse ready. His hand was sore or something. He'd write it another day.

"Outside," I said. "Out you go and keep going." He broke into a flood of words. "Me Gurkha—fighting man from hills," he said. "Me no dacoit (bandit). You my sahib, I fight for you, work for you, fix clothes. Your other boy he steal. I never steal from my sahib. Man of Nepal only steal from Hindu fools."

The recitation was cut short by the door opening slowly. The head of the former bearer peeked inside. He put on an expression of astonishment worthy of John Barrymore as he surveyed the ruination of my kit. Then he eyed the Gurkha

coldly. He was about to demand what money I owed him when the police walked in with a logging chain. A big, clanking thing strong enough to haul a coal car. Without saying a word, the silent Sikh buckled this around the man's arms and led him away like a captive tiger at the gateway to a rajah's harem.

The Gurkha was silently and expertly packing everything away. He considered himself hired. Suddenly he straightened up and hissed, "Punjabi—he had rail ticket?" "Yes, by gosh he has." He was gone like a greased boar and soon came back triumphantly bearing not only a ticket to Delhi but five rupees in money.

"Now master take Gurkha man," he argued. I didn't know anything about this gaunt brute, but he looked virile and peppy with his knife hanging there like a cleaver so I hurled discretion overboard and took him on.

A half hour later he was furiously arguing over a nickel with a taxi man as we landed in the teeming turmoil of the station. Certainly nobody is going to gyp me while this fighting fool is present —that is, nobody but him.

I wormed my way through the mob and climbed into a crowded train. It happened to be the wrong one and because it was I had my first experience with the hooded horror of India; the black Cobra.

We were two hours out of Lahore on a dusty, slow train when the conductor pounded on the window for ticket inspection. It was about mid-

night and I was asleep in a shroud of perspiration. He pounded vigorously so I got up and unlocked the door.

"Delhi," I said, handing him a string of tickets like an accordion. He looked them all over and said, "Wrong train. We're for Karachi."

"Karachi?" "Yes, get off here and go back or spend the night at Kot Kapura." "Why Kot Kapura?" "That's a junction point. You can get a morning accommodation train into Delhi."

I pulled on some clothes and hurried along to the servant cars for my Man Friday. He was rooted out, sleepy and protesting, from under batches of barefooted bearers and I tipped him the bad news that we were hopping at Kot, wherever that was.

"Where master stay?" he demanded practically. "How do I know—some hotel, no doubt."

"No hotel Kot." "No hotel!—well the dak bungalow then."

"No dak in Kot, sahib," he said gloomily. It sounded like a trick song.

"All right, the point is we're getting off there, so you pack up the spare shirts."

"Kot bad place," he argued. "No good. Much jungle. Much fever. Much mugger" (crocodile).

"Don't talk. We're getting off. Now go up and buy some water." He went protesting away with the vacuum bottle, had it filled and came back still arguing.

We rolled into a mussy station about 2.30.

There was that smell of India all over the place. Dust and burning human flesh and sewage. It was awful. The night was damp and we seemed closed in fearfully. The trees were so crowded around it seemed hard to breathe.

There was a small oil lamp lighting the station name, a watch tower full of signals and one or two men squatting about. They pointed in the general direction of the bamboo jungle and said the maharajah had a bungalow in there for white sahibs but we'd better shout pretty loud or the chowkidar might shoot.

I sent the boy over protestingly and he shouted like mad. When he came back he was gloomy and morose. "Got room, master. I stay here."

"Why, what's wrong?"

"No room for servant."

There was nobody standing about to carry luggage around, so the bearer unbent from his caste aloofness enough to help me across the fringe of jungle with the bags. They call these chaps bearers, but the only thing they'll bear is a grudge.

A tall, gaunt man with deep-set eyes under his purple turban stood by the bungalow door holding a lamp. He was a Sikh and looked furious about being awakened. They bundled me inside, closed the door and went away softly in the dark.

"Hey," I yelled. "How about a lamp?" They didn't answer. It was black as coal outside. The bungalow felt musty. I struck matches and felt around the place. There were three rooms with

high ceilings. Some ropes strung tight to pieces of wood was the bed. I undid my roll and put it there. It was spooky in there with jungle sounds on the outside. I thought of tigers. Then I heard a sort of coughing yawn near the back so I went to feel the door and it was bolted tight. The coughing yawn puzzled me, so I put the cartridge clip in the pistol undressed and climbed into the ropes. I put the revolver down between my knees. Only green-horns put it under the pillow in the Indian jungles.

I was hungry as a lion and couldn't sleep. My stomach was rumbling a bit so I opened the water. The boy had brought Perrier, which fizzes and rushes down your nose, but I drank it up. There were bats inside the house and they kept me awake.

With the first peak of dawn I was up to see where on earth I was. There were three big easy chairs in the room and a yellow carpet. The back room had a dressing table with a cracked mirror and off that was a sunken concrete place with a big tin bath in it. Under the bath was a drainage hole into the jungle. The bath was tin with two big patches on it. I could see these because it was upside down.

I wanted a drink horribly because mosquitoes had been feeding off my neck all night and in these swamp lands they probably were malaria carriers. With some water I could get outside a big dose of quinine, but there was none so I licked the quinine from my hand.

The coughing yawn echoed outside again. I went to look but the window was high in the wall. I stooped down and pulled the tin tub along the floor so I could stand on it. As I moved it the head of a black cobra came around the edge with a menacing sweep and I jumped straight in the air just as he pounced. He hit the side of the tub and it thudded like a drum. I was over the top of him marking myself down as a fool and an idiot. Here with a drain into the bungalow fairly coaxing snakes to come in for drink and shade, I was snooping around with loose slippers and bare legs.

I slapped the bath room door shut and got into jungle clothes—high boots with leather breeches. Then I picked up the pistol and a whippy cane and stood arguing with myself as to whether I should go back and kill the snake—at my own distance—or forget him and leave him there for the next man.

I was puzzled about that noise outside, so went around through the long lush elephant grass. It might have been a tiger, but the thing turned out to be a water buffalo, smeared with mud and tethered beside a pool. He had a cough or something and looked on me without interest.

I walked under the dropping trees to the railway track and then along the steel ties to the station. There was nobody around so I climbed the signal tower and the chap there said I could get over to the Delhi main line on a mixed freight

and passenger train but I'd have to go third class. I didn't mind that. He had a map there and showed me where I was. It was somewhere in Patiali, run by a rajah who is head of all the Sikhs. He owned the bungalow I was in. I told the signalman about the snake and he grinned.

"Cobra," I said, "a flat head."

"Kill quick," the Sikh advised. "Many vipers here." The Sikh has none of the Hindu soft-heartedness. He kills snakes lustily.

With the sun well up I went over again and kicked the bath door open. The snake didn't have much chance in there because the only cover was the tin tub. I looked around from the threshold but couldn't see him. I knew he was either under the tub or had gone out through the hole again. I went back and got the top of my typewriter. Just the case part. I threw this in and it crashed on top of the tub. The tub rocked and snake came out, partly coiled and partly reared up. He was about five feet long and didn't seem to know where to look first.

I let go three shots and he went sliding back in the corner like a long rope of spluttering sausages. I'd got him in the coiled part and he was bleeding and twisting up and down. He still seemed blind because he never faced me but kept pouncing downward at unseen things and once he bit himself. He was right in the V of the concrete wall. It was easy shooting in there, so I let him have three more and that was the end of my first cobra.

I went up beside him and he got the seventh bullet straight through the head.

Lots of fun if you have the proper equipment. But when they come on you unexpectedly. Well —you think it out.

PAGAN FRENZY

ARRIVAL in Delhi, India's stuffed shirt capital, came on a day set aside to honor the feminine biological function called menstruation; yes menstruation, and a hundred thousand Hindu hooligans ran riot through streets and bazaars squirting red ink, purple dye and green acid on every moving thing to pass their way from Brahminee bulls to ruling rajahs.

For the next three days all India will go mad with this color splashing stunt and many people —mostly children—will be blinded for life by crude acids squirted from water pistols, insect sprayers, bicycle pumps and anything else that will shoot a broad, ruinous stream over the white clothes of you or me or Uncle Dudley.

What's the big idea? you ask. Well, if I were to outline the Hindu mythology behind this frenzied behavior you'd be disgusted and I'd be jailed. It's just one of those superstitious outcroppings of black magic which makes this pagan peninsula the wildest east of Suez; the fiercest west of Fiji.

As I write now men and women are outside the bungalow drenching each other with crimson.

If I step out in my best bib and tucker it may be spared and it may be shot full of acid holes in a second or two depending on the whim of some hooligan. Already one shirt is stained ruby red forever. It just proves that anything can happen where women wear rings in their noses and cows bed down in hotel lobbies.

I spent the morning chatting about elephants with a woman who has 30 of them and doesn't know quite what to do about it. She's the Maharani of Cooch Behar and to my eye the most beautiful woman in all India. About noon I headed toward town to book tickets for Calcutta when I saw streams of people going by all covered with color. Most of them had their faces smeared with paint; clothes saturated with dirty dyes. The tum tum carts were covered with it.

I decided to walk and hadn't gone a block before a batch of grimy untouchables came clattering up the street behind a drum and squirted a stream of red dye at my chest.

I was carrying a bamboo and leather whip and turned on the skinny kids, but they scampered gleefully away and I started back to the hotel with half of Delhi staring after me.

A low brown car with the pennant of Cooch Behar at the radiator cap flag staff pulled up and the maharajah, age 12, invited me in. His mother, the ruling princess, was with him.

"Been to the circus?" she laughed. "Slaughter house," I said. "What's the idea?"

"Festival," she explained. "Hindu holy day devoted to the Goddess Vishnu."

"And who is Vishnu?" "A virgin god; one of the nine reincarnations of Brahma. This day is called Holi. As it turns out it's also the Parsee New Year and to-morrow is the holy day of the Christian world, so you see it is a big day."

"You mean Good Friday—but this business of squirting red ink all over . . ." "Read about it," the maharani advised. "Don't ask questions. It isn't that kind of story." So I read about it and now we let the matter drop.

If you're up on movie plots and Indian love lyrics you'll know that rajahs, nizamis, begums, sardars and other Hindu hooper doopers are potentates of power and wealth far ahead of feudal barons in the good old days of Captain Kidd. They hold the peasantry by the throat with the demand, "money or your life", and raid their own countryside for treasure. But the women don't count. Few of them show their face. Few of them can read or write. Reared in luxurious seclusion, they are helpless and hopeless. They don't know that two and two make four. They never heard of North America. They have everything that money can buy except brains and the right to live their own lives.

In the old days when the husband died the women were burned alive on the funeral pyre with his body. Now they live, but only in iron-

barred seclusion waiting death. That's the rule of the all-powerful twice-born Brahmins.

An exception to this rule is the Maharani of Cooch Behar. She's beautiful, powerful, a ruler in her own right. She is well known at London's Court of St. James, well known on the Champs Elysees and at India's picturesque durbars.

Since we were both stopping at Maiden's we met again. On one of these meetings she remarked; "I suppose India has offered you many many surprises—what has surprised you most?"

"Elephants and turbans. I thought India was a land where men rode about on elephants and wore turbans. I find they do neither one."

The Maharani laughed. "This elephant business is rather ticklish. Do you know the current viceroy has no elephant? Can you imagine the ruler of all India without an elephant? It's true. Never in the history of the country has there been a viceroy without an elephant before. Quite shocking! All sorts of people have offered him elephants; dozens of elephants, but he won't have one." I wasn't surprised. These are the days of economy waves and efficiency experts.

For the balance of that sun-baked afternoon I stayed inside the hotel compound trying to dope out some of the mysteries of this mysterious land. They pray to cows, make pets of pigs, eat cakes made from pressed ants, burn manure and use it for medicine.

Men let their shirt-tails dangle in the breeze

but wrap their heads tighter than the hide on a drum. They shave their heads but let the beards grow high, wide and handsome.

Women blush purple if you see their faces but any other part of the female form divine is public gazing ground. Waiters go barefooted but insist on wearing hats. If you drop a knife or fork on the floor the waiter won't pick it up. He notifies a bus boy who tells the sweeper to come and hoist it aloft.

A man is outcaste unless he has a son, but the son's chief job in life is to wait until father dies and then smash his skull with a log.

There are six classes at the movies and you or I with a white hide pay over a dollar to see a three-year-old picture and are expected to wear dress suits.

The Hindu hobo gets a better seat to see the same picture in the same show at the same time for a dime. The $1.00 we pay will keep a Hindu family of five for ten days.

In a land with more death-dealing snakes than all the rest of the earth combined, every hotel is built flat on the ground with open drains leading to the outside. In the dry season snakes crave water and shade. They find both in these drains and dozens of innocent travellers are killed every year.

Wednesday's paper is always dated Thursday and gives the news of last Monday. No papers are printed on Monday, but they all publish on

Sunday. You can buy a dozen oranges for four cents, but a glass of water is ten to fifteen.

It's all so cockeyed you simply can't figure it out. A mere handful of Britons are the real bosses, but they, in the caste system, are lower than the untouchable. The untouchable is not entitled to enter a shop to buy anything, yet the Briton is sought after and coaxed to come in and pay double prices for everything.

The army, which defends the land and the viceroy who rules it, have to pay full duty on every item brought in. The army pays top duty on its own band instruments and is not entitled to refund when they are taken out of the country again. Lady Willingdon had to pay heavy duty on her own silverware.

None of the Hindu bands can read a note of music, but they'll play any piece you put before them.

Women pray to half a hundred gods to have a son, feel disgraced if the child is a daughter, and yet millions of young Indians are in debt to the banias for life because of the high cost they have to pay for a bride. Why? Well, it's caste. A newspaperman, for instance, would have to marry a newspaper woman. If that was the case in Canada he'd certainly have to pay a mighty big price because there are probably twenty men to every woman in the news game. If I, a newspaperman, married a stenographer, which I did, I'd be less than the dust from that day onward in India.

Just twenty minutes before I started to pound off this admission that I don't know what it's all about, a baby was born in a squalid hut behind my alleged hotel. Right now the mother is working again sweeping leaves from the grass. She will probably be crippled and exhausted by night; but who cares? There are hundreds of millions of others waiting to take her job. If the baby dies they will throw it to the great greasy turtles which clutter up the river which cuts through the city. Life is cheap.

There are no such things as love affairs between a young man and a maid. Amour and the whispering of the old old story under the tamarind trees is just as foreign as sky-blue bath tubs.

Weddings are doped out in mercenary bickerings between the parents, the Brahmin priest who comes in for a big slice, and the money-lender who puts up the cash at 33 per cent. interest. After the wedding the man pays less attention to his bride than to the twist of his turban.

Husband and wife occasionally pack up a picnic lunch and go to the park with little Ranjhi and Sandhar, but their grim gaunt faces are stripped of any love, adventure or spirit. They have neither courage nor defiance. Only a crushing sense of inferiority which causes them to pay hard-earned money to sip water which washed the body of a Brahmin. Millions of them would work a month for the privilege of smoking a cigarette butt tossed away by a holy man. Think of it! And all they

hope for, pray for, work for, is to have a son who'll some day crack their bones on the funeral pyre and a chance to come back to the world as a better caste Hindu than when they went out of it.

That night of the menstrual holiday, eclipse stole over the moon of India and found a hundred million shrieking ignoramuses lining the sacred rivers rhythmically clapping hands and watching for some monster with blood-flecked jaws to come and devour the earth and all who dwell here. Holy humbugs had told them this would happen and the god of destruction would start by eating the moon, so they were down by the river bank to greet death with hullabaloo.

Temple gongs and pagoda tom-toms boomed up and down the Jumna as the faithful plunged in to wash away their sins before the awful hour of destruction. Beggars and priests cackling their hokum about alms, reaped a harvest and a mild civil war broke out when Mohammedans, who didn't believe the Brahmin bunk, stood jeering on the bank.

All day Delhi had been silent as the grave. A deserted oven, I padded about in the powdery dust wondering where on earth everyone had gone. Not even a holy cow or a scavenger dog lurked about the place. The only living thing I saw was a man somersaulting in the dust for mile after mile in some effort to rid himself of stomach ache.

Near the battered Kashmiri gate of old Delhi, a holy madman with a Rudy Vallee voice, dishes

out charms against snakes, murder, bill collectors, sunstroke, childlessness, bunkers, love, toothache or anything else you want any day of the week. He can guarantee you a hole in one, twin boys or a cash bonus if you pay him enough. Now and again his advice kills a hoodlum with more faith than horse sense, but who cares about that? He has a vast following who come and sit with him while he says something like, "Go away, bold bad pneumonia", and expects it to go. This menstrual day, with the rest of town under lock and key, he was still doing a bit of soothsaying.

A runty broken man with his face half rotted off came to ask relief. He grovelled in the dust before the quack who sat in a heap of cow manure.

The holy one counted off his red and white beads, jabbered and whirled his hands in the air. The patient leaped to his feet, then fell on his face, got up and did it all over again. Then he started with rhythmic steadiness, up and down, up and down, until he swooned away in the white sun. Just nice clean fun.

Since everyone else in India's sun-drenched capital seemed asleep, I went back to roll myself in but found the bungalow swarming with white ants. There must have been twenty billion of them. Attracted by chocolate biscuits picked up in Lahore, they were devouring everything in the room. Leather stuff, cigarettes, soap, tooth paste, hair oil, court plaster, book covers. Everything was alive with ants. A vast army crawled over the

floor with bits of leather pulled from boots, bags or bed roll.

Luckily I had a newly filled insect gun and put on a big league gas attack which strangled ants by the million. The lowly untouchable came in afterwards and swept up a pyramid of dead ants a foot square at the base. Two hours before there hadn't been one in that room, living or dead.

With the sun beating down on the window and the inside thermometer showing 103, I dropped on the bed, and the world of burning ghats, pouncing cobras, Shalimar nautch girls and thieving bearer boys drifted away in a shimmering heat haze.

I woke to the thumping of war-drums, the screams of parading men and the wail of pipes. The noise was weird, fantastic, fearful. My gaunt Gurkha, with the gleaming knife at his belt, squatted at the foot of the bed chewing sugar cane. I stretched and got up to go out. He fell into step beside me. Strange to Hindu custom this heavy-jawed guardian wasn't going to take a chance on losing me. I'm his meal ticket and if some fanatic dumps me to the crocodiles he has to rustle up a new job.

We came into the street which was now teeming with men. They chanted religious ditties and streamed across fields and fences to the crescent bend where the Jumna sweeps between old and new Delhi.

I crowded among ascetics, yogis, sadhus and other smelly saints to the steps leading into the

water. The moon was shining, but it wasn't yet dark. The priests were moaning and groaning up and down the ghats, telling the wide-eyed hooligans that the moon was being eaten by the demon. This world would be eaten too, they said, unless the mob kicked in with silver.

The drums blared, cattle bellowed, people shrieked and fake disciples hurried among the hungry with brass jugs demanding cash—" or else the world and you will be eaten up ".

Whole flights of steps led down into the holy waters at this place and holy men with smelly matted hair and fishy eyes sprawled there waiting destruction. Two of these seized my bare legs and dragged me down beside them. They were friendly old fools hopefully waiting the doom of time. They laughed and cheered and screamed as the shadow grew farther across the moon and the drunken drummers stepped up the tempo of their deafening dirge.

One of the Brahmins, astonished and rather annoyed at seeing a white man present, came near. The sadhus and yogis scampered away like scared rabbits. They must never defile the presence of the twice-born. The Brahmin chap sat down with a sigh as if he'd just done a hard day's work. " A lunar eclipse," he said; " the people think the world is ending.".

" They seem very happy about it," I suggested. " Oh yes. We have given the river dispensation. This stream joins the Ganges. Any Hindu who

dies by the banks of the Ganges goes straight to paradise."

"But an hour from now the moon will be full and clear; these people will know this is not the crack of doom and then what?" I asked.

"They'll know the gods have saved them," the priest hissed in triumph.

"And I suppose they'll think you Brahmins brought it all about." "Probably," he snapped.

The blares and screams grew louder. Men plunged in the water and gulped it down from begging bowls seized from the holy fakirs. Radical papers were distributed. One given to me was entitled, "Young Men Who Offer Their Heads".

The ascetics beside me chattered incessantly. They clutched my arm and pointed across the water to the deepening shadow on the moon. The Gurkha behind me grew uneasy and repeated time and again, "Master come now".

"No, no. Go away," I'd tell him, but he stuck close by like a sad-eyed hound. Darkness came across the plain and the moon gradually cleared while the bathers came from the water and decked themselves out in their Friday-go-to-meeting loincloths. When I got up to go the sadhus stood and salaamed, which is something a sadhu seldom thinks of doing. I must have made a hit.

FAKES AND FAKIRS

PERHAPS, in a foot-loose amble through India, you'd like to see the far-famed, much ballyhooed rope trick. Well, you can't. There is no such thing. Never was. If you don't believe it consult "Kim" of the Calcutta Statesman who's done all sorts of research into Hindu black magic and swears the rope trick is a myth.

But even with no rope trick there's enough mesmeristic monkey business in India to give a man the creeps. One day while loafing on the sands of Juhu Beach, near Bombay, a prowling magician leaned over my shoulder and whispered, "Scorpions, sahib; many scorpions. Watch out for scorpions."

The mystery man stretched out a scrawny brown arm. It was bare; the fist was clenched. "This hand," he said, "full of scorpions. Live scorpions. Scorpions kill the sahib maybe."

I felt like saying, "So's your Uncle Dudley," but before I got a chance he opened up his hand and out walked 10, 20, 30 death-dealing scorpions. The things gave me goose pimples.

Now I've read as much as the next man about Hindu mesmerism and hypnotism. I also know

that no man on earth could hold 30 scorpions in a clenched fist because the things are nearly the size of a canary. But here they were feeling angrily about with their poison stings or lazily walking toward me. They couldn't have come from the hand at all. Where did they come from?

I looked around. Exercise boys were galloping gray stallions along the sands. I wasn't seeing things then. I determined that to prove I wasn't hypnotized I wouldn't give this bird a cent of money. Soon I had to start backing up because the scorpions were drawing closer and closer. Vile, vicious little reptiles.

"Sahib no like?" The magician wheezed. "No, no like. Take 'em away."

He said something in Hindustani and the deadly little brutes abruptly obeyed him. They stopped dead in their tracks. He said something else and they started off again. I counted. Like Amos 'n' Andy I checked and double checked. There were at least 27 deadly reptiles and my shoes lying there in the sand.

"I put them away," the fakir said. He took off his yellow dotted turban, took a white cloth from under it and nonchalantly gathered up the scorpions. He knotted the cloth and let them lie in the sand while I knocked my shoes together and slipped them on.

I walked over and sat a bit shakily on a rock. There's something about this goofy

place that gets me. The fakir, always smiling, trailed along. "Read fortune," he said. "One rupee."

"Nix."

"Good fortune; gods tell fortune."

"Doesn't seem to have helped you much." "I don't need much, sahib. No home, no clothes; just place to sleep."

"I'll give you eight annas." "Sahib will give more. But eight annas will be start."

He rattled off the usual nonsensical bunk without scoring a hit. Said among other things I was rich and always would be. Probably I am compared to this chap's standards. Then he did something which definitely put the breeze up me.

"Can read sahib's thoughts," he said. "Very easy. If sahib will think of a girl. Any girl anywhere, I will write name on paper. One rupee, sahib."

"You write English?" "No, but I can write the name. Think, sahib." I thought the name Olive Pinchin. She's my sister-in-law, 5,000 miles distant from India. Surely nobody in Juhu ever heard of Olive. Without a moment's hesitation the fakir wrote in a bold, round hand, "Olive Pinchin". I was flabbergasted. I put the paper in my pocket to check up later. I figured this chap must have mesmerized me and I just thought I was reading the words Olive Pinchin. But as I write this, months later, the name is still there,

bold and clear. Now, what's the answer, folks? You figure it out.

With 45 cents of mine in his pocket the mind reader stalked away in a flutter of white cotton. I walked down the dusty palm-lined road. There were filthy palm-thatched bungalows there alive with women. The men were off at the mills earning a maximum of 41 cents a day. With this they keep a half a dozen daughters and three or four mongrel pups. The whole grove was alive with water buffalo. Big meaty brutes with shiny hides. They milk them. The milk tastes like turpentine. Ferocious-looking things these, but puny little girls were driving them about and making them like it.

All these people untouchables. Lower than the dog, crawly with vermin yet more or less alert of eye. Babies in the dust. Medicine men sat there with dried snake heads, bits of roots, bottles of yellowish goo, shreds of monkey heart, strings of teeth. They made charms that either killed or cured quickly. They looked on me with supreme indifference. Some little girls were having their noses pierced with lopsided rings so I stood and watched.

Another human scarecrow ambled up with a lump of soft mud in his hand. It was about the size and shape of a derby hat. "Make tree grow," he said. Here was an old one at last. I'd read about this mango tree game. It's all hypnotism. I said sure, if he'd make a tree grow

up and blossom out of that mud I'd willingly give him a rupee.

He sat his lump of mud in the middle of the road, made a few passes and I'll be doggoned, if a tree didn't start to grow right on the spot. It came up and out in no time. Leaves sprung from it, blossoms came out. More leaves on full-sized branches.

"Feel, sahib; real tree. Real leaf." I felt. I waved my hands about. Sure enough they bumped into the branches. I went through my pockets looking for familiar things. The picture of my boys. There they were, sure enough. I looked back at the tree. Right in the road. Still growing. I looked away and back at the tree unbelieving. It stood there like any other tree, although I couldn't tell you what kind. I started away more baffled than ever.

The old boy followed. One more stunt. The supreme stunt. For another rupee, payable to his dhobie, he'd burn himself alive right there on the road.

"Okay, Roger. Shoot the works."

He didn't understand all this, but it sounded like assent, so he blabbered a lot of bunk, waved his arms about and had the dhobie bring a can of oil—or what was supposed to be oil. This was poured over him from head to foot. I could smell it. Coal oil. There must have been a rupee's worth of the stuff.

A match was put at the man's feet and at once

he went up in a yellowish blue blaze. I stood there fascinated, unbelieving. Then a strange thing happened. With the man melting before my very eyes a fly of some predatory type lit on the back of my neck and proceeded to get his blood rations. It startled me and I slapped my neck a real wallop. The fly was crushed and so was the illusion. I looked up and there, the hypnotic spell broken, stood the old scarecrow a bit disappointed in the realization that the fly had brought me back to my senses and I could see only a damp old geyser standing in some water. You might call this Jinxing the Jitters in Juhu.

But up in Delhi a beefy Briton has beaten these masters of monkey business at their own game.

In a land fairly crawling with fakirs, jugglers, yogis, fish-eyed snake charmers, gaunt sword swallowers, fire eaters, tiger tamers, mongoose mesmerists and other sucker hunters a beef-eating Briton from Brighton rules the roost.

Alastor is India's big league, all wool soothsayer. His real name is Bill Smith, believe it or not, and he used to be a flunkey in a duke's home. He wanders the highways and byways of India in a gaudy costume and whips the crystal gazers and snake singers at their own racket.

Eight trunks of letters from every country on earth tell this captain of clap-trap what a marvellous clairvoyant he is. He has them from kings and princes, from gangsters and guides, from

financiers and fishermen, parsons and plumbers, rubes and rajahs, bankers and boobs. He has read the stars and hands of every viceroy and governor of India in the past 21 years.

During the social season you find him in Delhi. When the viceroy and attendant yes-men hike for the hills of Simla the star gazer will trail along to chart their destiny in the sands. A whole horde of hooligans copy this master magician, but he harvests the cream of the cash crop and gives most of it away.

Probably I'm a punk subject for a clairvoyant, because I go prejudiced. I don't believe any man anywhere on earth can read my character on a first meeting or tell my past, present or future. However, if any man has more ballyhoo than this turbaned tear puller I've never met him, so I rolled in on Alastor the great, wondering if he'd put the hypnotic eye on me.

He was off guard. The long green and white robe of a high priestess was open at the throat. His hat was tossed on a chair showing a round bald head and he was absorbed in the business of pruning his toe nails. At sight of me he ducked like a scared hare into a back room and I was left to kick my heels in one of those oriental rooms you see on stage. Kashmir costumes and rugs. Punjabi cushions, incense, and hangings of imperial purple. All the well-known hokum.

After a pair of Hindu boys had built up his entrance the prince of piffle himself came in. Just

so he'd get a good slant at me he dilly-dallied about getting down to business. Showed me letters, scads of them, his books on mysticism, his predictions for the year.

Finally he had me lay my hands on a big pillow of yellow silk which rested on our four knees. In a sleepy sing-song voice this so-called master read my life story and not even a five-year-old boy could possibly have been more absurd or positive in his statements. I was, he said, the third son of a noted family, but the fourth son would be the brains and leader of the lot. I'm the oldest and there is no fourth. We are not a noted family.

I had married in 1928 and had a son, he added. I was married in 1926 and have three children. Everything he did or said was absolutely and completely wrong from first to last. He described me as a master of detail. I loathe and curse all detail. He said I was an orphan. My parents still live. He said all my investments this year would go wrong. I have no investments. He said I was born in Scotland, suffered a great loss in 1928, had many love affairs, and was an artist. Every bit wrong.

When he finished he looked up confidently and gradually grew more wide-eyed as I told him he was wrong in absolutely every statement he made. If this is the great mysticism, then I must be Boo Boo the Battling Bulgarian, or somebody.

However, bunk or no bunk, this man came to India 21 years ago, started sidewalk soothsaying in opposition to home-towners and rose king of the craft. His reputation runs from Ceylon to Kashmir, from Calcutta to Kathiawar. It must only prove that Barnum was right.

Disappointed at this man's brand of hokum, I prowled the ruins of six distant civilizations seeking another yogi and at last spotted one cross-legged in the sand whining his little piece about alms.

"You are a yogi?" I asked. "Aye, sahib, the yogi who buries in the ground."

"What is yogi?" "Suspended life, sahib. I am 300 years old."

You can't argue with a man when he says he's 300. You say, "Sure, I'm Walter Hagen," and stop messing about.

"How long can you bury yourself, yogi?" "One week, sahib. Sometimes two weeks. I control myself, the birds of the air, the serpents of the rock. Come, sit by me, sahib, as I show you."

He swallowed three rags and vomited them all up again.

"Simple trick," he said. "But this shows control. Now the birds. They will come." He made some sort of a throaty noise and doves came down on the ground, dozens of gray doves. Then some hawks came and settled there near our feet.

Goofy thing, this. I don't think they could have heard him.

"Vibrations," he said. "The birds are in tune. You are not in tune. We are on the wheel. Life ascending and life descending. No one ever is still except he knows yogi."

This was so much gibberish to me. I couldn't make it out. But the birds were there and even when I clapped my hands they remained. Some boys gathered around to see what made this white man squat with a beggar of the field, so we went over to a sand pit. "The sahib will bury me deep," he instructed.

He started breathing in a strange rhythmical way and gradually his eyes rolled and he collapsed. The boys piled in and covered him deep in the sand. All but his feet was under 20 inches of fine reddish sand. I sat there with my watch as 15 minutes passed. Five more minutes and I got worried. Altogether he stayed under 26 minutes and then it was me who cracked—not the yogi. He'd probably be there yet, but I thought the brown bag of skin and bones might have really died, so had the lads dig him up again. He was a pretty awful color. Sort of gray. But in a few minutes his pep was all back and he was ready to call out the cobras.

That was my signal to get going because if there is one thing I've seen too many of, it's cobras. I went away all puzzled. The master of the mystics is a dismal figure. A sidewalk soothsayer sleeps

under sand and charms the birds straight out of the air. One has an iron-bound reputation, and the other pleads for coppers. What is this, anyhow, a trick?

GANDHI; MARTYR OR MOUNTEBANK?

IN Poona jail, emaciated and embittered, languished India's Holy humbug Mohamdas Karamchad Gandhi; lawyer, money-lender, revolutionist, salt-maker and agitator for an independent India.

Just now, but for the royalty on his books, he's reduced to three loincloths, three meals and three grouches a day.

In Delhi, imperial capital, sits Freeman Thomas, Viscount Willingdon, Viceroy of India. He lives in the largest, costliest and most amazing home on earth, holds the power of life and death over more humans than anyone else in the history of time and holds Gandhi in jail to await his "pleasure". During my foot-loose wanderings through India, I had the opportunity to meet and talk with both these powerful but vastly different personalities.

Meeting the naked fakir came about by accident. A professor; an absent-minded professor, lay sick in Bombay. He wasn't really sick, just had the jitters. Indian terror of sickness and black magic had him down, but he had to make one pilgrimage to Poona before

heading for home and asked me to come along.

On the run to the red hills I was a sort of lady's maid to a man with the shakes. Poona station, on arrival, was aswarm with Gandhi's gang all done up in fresh clean pantaloons and shoulder shawls. Looked like a laundrymen's holiday. The professor lifted his long legs into a tonga and vanished for academic fields so I ambled around aimlessly and soon came to a low stone wall to which half-clad Hindus were clinging by thousands. It looked like a monkey house in the Zoo.

Puny little brown men clinging to banisters, posts, light clusters, trees, statues and anything else they could grab hold of.

"What's happening?" I asked one chap. "Hartal," he said. That didn't look right to me, so I asked another and he said, "Auction." A third said, "Meeting," so I decided to go inside and see for myself.

Two soldiers in spotless white, two policemen in gravy-dabbed blue, and a dozen or so nobodys, called peons, barred my way. "Your card," the soldier demanded. "I have none. What's going on?" "The auction of Mr. Gandhi's articles." "I'd like to go in. I may buy something."

They let me pass into a darkened stone room, where a half dozen Hindus squatted on the floor and a half dozen Europeans stood by the wall. I went native and squatted. It was cool squatting.

When the sale started they stood up a small safe, said they had to realize 364 rupees "because of deliberately unpaid tax accounts" and asked for bids. None came. The auctioneer harangued in the usual way and finally got 70 rupees which, at that day's rate of 30 cents, was $21.

The typewriter came next. A trim black Underwood portable. I went up to see what language it wrote. It was English and in good shape, so I immediately bid every dime I had, which was $9.60. The typewriter was worth at least $30 and while I've got two, I sure would like to have had Gandhi's keyboard, even if it was only to give it back to him.

A woman topped my bid by a dollar. Although I didn't have it, I added another dollar. She came back with a third boost and I had to quit, so Mr. Gandhi's typewriter went for $12.60 and somebody certainly got a bargain.

Another safe brought about $10 and then they stuck up the small brown spinning wheel. Nobody would have the thing. If I had really thought there'd be no bids I would have offered $5 even if I never did get the gadget back home, but they were all silent like me. The auctioneer seemed a bit flabbergasted, as auctioneers often are, but he finally quit in disgust. Hindus are good at quitting in disgust. They've got about as much staying power as a pair of white mice in a biological lab. Certainly some souvenir collecting tourist missed a golden chance here.

Once during the sale a holy cow ambled in to the bare white room, looked around in arrogant disgust and walked out again. The troops had barred all the monkey men, but knew enough not to start a holy war by shooing the cow away.

I expected to see feverish bidding by loyalists when they put up the Gandhi manuscripts, but the auctioneer didn't because he gave a long speech about having to get 364 rupees, and here—with nearly everything gone, they had less than half.

"What about the car?" somebody shouted. "Sure, give us the car," another chimed in, but no car was put on sale.

The manuscripts were gradually sold at a few cents each. I got hold of one on "untouchability," but didn't buy it. Dated Sept. 18, 1930, the holy man wrote: "Untouchability implies pollution by touch and is absurd. It is an excrescence. Wherever it obtains, empty formalism replaces religion. None can be untouchable, as all souls are sparks from the one fire. It is wrong to treat humans as untouchables. It is also wrong to entertain false scruples about touching a dead body. It is only out of consideration to health that we bathe after touching a dead body. . . ."

He went on at great length preaching a sort of sermon against "this absurd slavery called untouchability." Some day these original manuscripts may be worth a lot of cash, but they went for a dollar or two in the shadow of Poona jail.

Still wishing I had bought the spinning wheel and shipped it home, I went back past the monkey men toward the jail. Somebody hissed and heaved a coco-nut at me. The thing landed on the road and broke. At once the heaver was seized by a plainclothesman, while another hurried after me to arrange a prosecution. "Wouldn't think of it," I told him. "This chap hasn't done any harm."

The cop argued. "He should be sent to jail for four months."

"Nonsense," I answered, "that's the way revolutions start. The man never even hit me. He's a rotten shot." The Hindu grinned. The cop turned him loose. I think that chap's my pal.

During the same afternoon one of the wall squatters was killed by a cobra. What interested me about the thing was the casual way in which the papers mentioned his death. Here is the item:

"A tragic end overtook a boy, who, seeing a bird rushing into a hole in a parapet wall, thrust his hand in to seize it, but was bitten by a snake. The boy fell down unconscious. Snake-charmers were sent for and they succeeded in catching a cobra as it got out from the hole. The boy, who was aged twelve, died soon after."

The professor didn't get through with his academic palaver in time for the down train so I tried crashing the gate on Gandhi. Never got

to first base. They just gave me the bum's rush. Then I asked if I could deliver a letter to the sainted rebel. No; not a chance. Well, could I mail a letter and seek an appointment? Oh yes, I could do that, but it would be a waste of time and postage.

After days and days of fussing and red tape it looked like no interview with the holy man. I had left the comparative cool of Poona and gone back to Bombay but decided to take one more whirl at gate crashing before giving up. Somehow somebody's orders got tangled or the guard didn't know what was in the wind or something. Anyhow on this last attempt I stood in a long gray corridor and swung off into a smaller gray companionway.

Gandhi was there idly pawing through a literary review. His gaunt legs were folded back like an acrobatic accordion. His creased soles pointed upward. He glanced sideways at my feet and said: "Please," but didn't look up. I took off my shoes obediently but not reverently. It was cooler that way anyhow.

"Now be brief," the mahatma snorted noisily. He still hadn't looked up. "You came here curious about something—what are you curious about?" "Well, your name for one thing. What's your name just so we get started right?"

Gandhi laughed out loud. That was a new one. The front page has been his for four years

and here was a young whippersnapper asking his name. "You haven't read any of the books about me?" he asked, becoming the canny lawyer that he is. "No, and I don't want to. I want my own stuff because I'm writing for average folks and average folks have not read your biographies."

"My name is Mohandas Karamchad Gandhi — and yours?" "Gordon Allan Sinclair, Canadian."

"They call you Mahatma—is that a title?" "Yes."

"Well, in your scheme of democracy do you include titles?" "It is a silly question," Gandhi said, dismissing all that.

"Well, as I came to India, a man gave a lecture about you on shipboard. He said your plan was to get back to primitive nature. To abolish all railways, factories, machinery, doctors, hospitals, motor cars, hotels, even knives and forks. Is that true?"

"Such a thing is a vast and vague generality. As a vast and vague generality it is true. You, on your incredible continent, judge a man's progress by the number of bathtubs in his home—is that one true?"

I laughed. So did Gandhi. "We do like a lot of bathtubs," I agreed.

"Surely. Your vast hotels declare to the world they have 2,000 rooms and 2,000 baths. A vain, absurd boast of cleanliness."

"But surely, Mr. Gandhi, you, who have travelled, agree that India is undoubtedly the filthiest, smelliest, unhealthiest country in the known world. I know it is not polite for me to say all this but I'm almost in hygienic terror. You, by a campaign of back to the spinning wheel, say a man can earn three annas (6 cents) a day and that is enough, but I pay 20 rupees ($6) a week for drinking water alone. Surely a man would starve and die on three annas."

"The average adult income is less than that now under this satanic government—and men do starve and die," he hissed.

"Surely, but the average day's earnings in the mills where machinery is used is 21 annas (42 cents). Isn't it better to step up the standard this way than by defying the British?"

"My son. These things are too deep for you. Why don't you run along to play golf and drink beer and bath in your many, many bathtubs?"

"When I get back to Canada I shall do all those things. Meantime is it fair to ask that if you were liberated today you would continue twisting the lion's tail?"

"What is this twisting of tails?" Gandhi asked as he shifted his bony limbs. "I mean tantalizing England; making salt, flying an illegal flag."

"Of course I would go on. My people expect it. I have long since abandoned all thought of

personal comfort or retirement. Just now I own nothing in all this earth. Possessions are the curse of man. The one with the most possessions finds the most difficulty."

"But on so many points you line up with England. Heartily approve their policy?"

"What points?" the little brown man asked. "Why, sanitation. You agree India is filthy. The British try to clean it up. Caste, too—you don't approve of caste?" "No, it is sinful."

"But you were born the son of a dewan?" "Yes—but I am an outcast. I am untouchable." "Why?" "Because I crossed the water to England."

"And child marriage. Didn't you approve the law making it an offence to marry girls under 14?" "No good can come from this satanic government. Love would have corrected the marriage of children."

"But doesn't law get the same result more quickly than love?" "Again you become a man of bathtubs," Gandhi snapped. "You quote slogans."

"Yes," I agreed, "and the slogan that sweeps India is 'Boycott British Goods'. You coined that one."

"We are ground under the heel of invaders," he said, apropos of nothing in particular. "We are forced to accept ideas and ideals contrary to all our manhood, all our culture, all our belief."

I felt like arguing. Manhood! Good heavens, where in this pagan peninsula is there manhood? But I was silent and so was Gandhi.

"You said after the break-up of the round table conference that the Ganges would soon run red with blood—do you still think so?" "It is inevitable. The time may be delayed, but it shall come."

"When our people are being attacked and beaten and jailed by invading devils, it is sometimes difficult for them to restrain from meeting violence with violence. It would be well for you to keep away. Very well for you. Already 15,000 of our people are in prison. That cannot go on. The hold of England crumbles. The men of India will not be denied."

"And you—are you comfortable here?" "My comfort is no concern of myself or anyone else. You will now excuse me . . ."

He handed me a shoe, brought his glasses down to the tip of his nose and looked upward like a sick old man. He is 62 now, well beyond the average Hindu age, and he is so very, very thin. His wife is in a different jail; his disciples spread around among furnace-like lock-ups; his belongings scattered to the winds, but here he sits like a meditative Buddha scoffing at our bathtubs and making no attempt to clarify or explain his belief that all progress is wrong.

We should douse the electric lights, scrap all machinery and live in hovels on a nickel a day.

There should be neither sewers or plumbing, doctors, or dentists, medicine or meat. India under Gandhi would be back to the cave-man paganism, with the tiger and the cobra as twin monarchs in a land of festering death. I don't wish him any tough luck, but how would you like to do without cars, trains, telephones, radios, electricity and, the pet horror, bathtubs?

At the opposite end of the social structure is power and supreme authority. The viceroy. The only viceroy of India who owns no elephant —but many bathtubs. He is much easier, much franker and much more charming to see and talk with than his rival for the front page who lies in jail without trial.

I found him leaning back, relaxed, in a deep crimson leather armchair. He tapped his thin knee with a paper knife, inhaled from a long thin cigarette and said: "The way to handle all this India fuss is to cut out the cackle and get on with it. This is the advice I'm giving the government at home all the time. That's what I've been trying to do and it seems to work. Of course, I've been lucky. Very lucky. Three or four apparent miracles have come to my assistance and now the sting has gone out of ordinary criticisms levelled at this office."

"You think everything is going to settle down then; the boycott and bedlam, the ballyhoo and bloodshed?"

"No, no. I don't say that. I'm not so hope-

ful. But I do say things are better. After we arrested Gandhi—scuttled him off to jail five days after he landed—we expected the very devil of a show and were prepared for it. To our utter amazement things passed off quite smoothly. That's almost a miracle."

"And is Gandhi in jail indefinitely?" "Just exactly that. Gandhi is in jail indefinitely."

"Until he dies?" I asked. "Well, no. We certainly hope he doesn't die in jail. That would make a martyr of him and would bring on a bad state of doings."

"But it might be a good idea if he got very sick and was released in time to pass out peacefully?" His excellency smiled and then, diplomat that he is, shifted the subject. "You know," he said, "Gandhi is a rather decent little fellow. I'm afraid I like him. He has a keen sense of humor and undoubted courage. I've known him for years. But turn him loose on this fanatical political idea of his and he becomes a sort of tiger man. They call him saint. Well, in that case, I hope I'm never a saint."

"Have you heard from him in jail?" "Yes, he has written a long and careful letter to say what a fiend of Satan I am. It's quite a piece of writing. I have not acknowledged it."

"Are you going to?" "I am not. The world must understand that these people here must be treated with firmness. Threats without action are most absurd. That's why I say cut the

cackle. Plans should be made and announced. Then they should be carried out. No hesitation or weakening or backsliding is possible."

"They tell me that the new ordinances give you the power of life and death over more human beings than any other man in the history of the world."

"Yes, that's true. At first I rather trembled under the responsibility, but luckily I'm the sort of chap who can throw things off and forget about them. I don't think I worry very easily."

"So you can start things and carry them out?"

"Oh, yes," the viceroy smiled.

"And now you're like Alexander with no more worlds to conquer? You can't look out on the world for a bigger and better job because there are no bigger and better jobs."

"Right you are; but don't you think I merit a rest? When I'm done with this viceroy's post I shall be 70 years old. Doesn't that entitle me to settle down somewhere in England and potter about the garden? I should think it would. But I am quite definitely coming back to Canada one day. I must catch one more Canadian salmon," he smiled, recalling happy days.

"Are you in terror of having a bomb tossed or a sniper shoot at you?" I went on. "They seem to be shooting at governors quite regularly in these hectic days."

"I guess I'm a bit of a fatalist in that connection," the viceroy said. "If they shoot me I'm afraid they shoot me and that's that. However, it won't be a man."

"How do you mean?" "Women. That's the real trouble. The last three governors to be done in have been done by women. If somebody wrecks my train or throws a bomb or pulls a trigger it will probably be a woman."

"And you're prepared against that?" "Well, hardly, no. There isn't much you can do. If they shoot, they shoot."

The viceroy was smiling quite cheerily about life. He didn't seem to be worrying much about anything. It was a swell sunny day and he seemed to like talking to a slang-tossing reporter instead of a stuffed shirt who talked profoundly about the fall of tea revenue in Darjeeling.

"And now, with no more worlds to conquer, you plan what?" "Retirement to England. But that will be several years hence. There is work to be done in India. Piles of work. There will probably be trouble with the Moslems. Well, then. Let's get on with it. The days of British conquest and determination are certainly not over."

The secretary had walked in. Some maharajah had been waiting some time, he said. Well, who am I to keep a rajah cooling his heels? In a crimson car I rolled away from the most elaborate house the world has ever seen; from the presence of a tall, thin Englishman who holds in his bony

hands the destinies of more people than any other human, living or dead. And probably it doesn't prove anything but Mr. Gandhi and Lord Willingdon are both very very thin.

BRIDES AND BOOBS

THIRTY million Indian women are practical slaves in the homes of men they have bought and paid for on the instalment plan. Girls of the ghat land pay plenty in cash, cows, cotton or corn to get themselves a lord and master. From the hour they are married and marched away to the home of their husband they never set foot outside again until they are carried to the funeral pyre, or, in the case of Mohammedans, to the acres of Allah.

Another forty million never budge outside the front porch unless they are swathed in enough sheeting to sail a yacht. They wrap themselves up in all sorts of gaudy gadgets but don't permit one little finger to be exposed to the vulgar view of men.

I used to spend sun-drenched days in Imperial Delhi prowling the riotous bazaars which flank the grand trunk road watching life go by on parade. Processions of life and death and military pomp. Corpses being carried in chairs; brides being carried in baskets, babies being carried on brown backs and everything from beds to bathtubs being carried on heads.

Four worn-out nobodys of 30 or so went jog trotting up the filthy street with a gruesome burden. A huge car with black glass all round passed haughtily. The woman in that car can see out, but nobody can catch the slightest glimpse of her. Another four men come jogging by with a mysterious red burden on their shoulders. That's another woman in "purdah". She can't afford a black-glassed car so she sits in a basket covered with scarlet cotton and tries not to be sick when the starving carrier boys lurch.

Here comes a couple of rajahs with out-riders. They live in vast white palaces which flank the viceroy's house. The capitol and viceroy's place cost $70,000,000, but the woman who cuts the grass has three children to keep on a nickel a day. Her wages are duly set down in the official blue book and she has to contribute to the upkeep of the marble palace when she buys salt.

A pilgrim fakir on the road to the Ganges stops while his chela, or aide-de-camp, comes to beg from me. No matter if you gave every beggar in all India a $5 bill none of them would ever thank you. They glare menacingly; curse if you don't give, spit if you do. If you sit in any one place long enough a fakir or juggler or master of voodoo will soon come along to do his tricks and smell you out.

This emaciated man with the long white beard decided to camp on my feet until I kicked in with the price of some rice. After I got used to his

smell I learned he spoke English. He could even write English. "I go to the mother (the Ganges) for the fifth and last time," he whined in a sexless sing-song voice.

"You beg your way?" "My chela begs."

"But you never give thanks." "Thanks? Of course I give no thanks. Is it not written that he who gives to the man of Brahma sets up a cash credit for himself in the next world?"

"You mean that every anna a man gives to you is put to his credit in another world?" "Surely, surely, it is written."

"Well, who wrote it? Who is the bookkeeper who looks after this complicated finance? There are six million beggars in India."

The withered brown bones creaked as the old fool fidgeted in annoyance. Two white women came and stood nearby. I was embarrassed because this egg wore less than September morn. They didn't seem to worry.

Another corpse went by on the shoulders of his sons. They carried the body off into a field and set it down while they ate something, then continued the long last parade to the ghats. A camel caravan swung in from the plains and two sahibs went by in a car loaded with golf clubs.

"Why do you go to Benares?" I asked old bag of bones. "The cough is bad," he said, giving a sepulchural demonstration. "No wonder if you lie around naked. Why do you go naked?" "Clothes are of this world."

"Well, so is food and money. You seem to want them." This language appalled the old windbag. He suggested that in the next world I'd be a pariah dog; whatever that is. Still it might be worse. I might be a Hindu holy man.

Two or three more shrouded women went by so I asked about that too. "It is written—it is bad for man to look on the face of woman." "But what about these women sweeping the roads, what about these gaudy ladies in the fine motor cars?"

He snorted in disgust as I mentioned the untouchables. They are the road cleaners, the harvesters of filth and disease. But the wives and daughters of maharajahs also go about with their faces uncovered. The old boy was floored by this situation. No priest had thought it out for him.

"I get for you something," he said by way of compromise. "Come." We started walking the great highway which connects the pomp and plutocracy of New Delhi with the filth and crawling death of the old. Away across the fields was a ruin. One of the six earlier Delhis. We went slowly across the orange-colored sands, the old man coughing horribly and leaning on his stick. The place was aswarm with goats, yaks, buffalo and tiny long-haired horses from Tibet. What they ever found to eat there is miles over my head.

Around the ruin was a group of food stands.

Boy what food! Awful! Beyond description! You could scarcely see food or salesman for the flies and ants which crawled about. In the shadow of a dome-shaped mausoleum a teacher sat surrounded by boys who droned their lessons. The old man and the teacher talked about me. Then they offered a book of the Brahminee laws so that I might know the hideous sins to come and gobble me up if I didn't give to beggars every time I was asked.

The book, of course, was written by Brahmins —the highest of all Hindus—and here, believe it or not, is what happens if you or I or anyone else shall wound or kill a Brahmin. Any Brahmin mind and half the bank clerks in India are Brahmins.

"He who kills or wounds a Brahmin shall be condemned at his death to take the form of one of those insects which feed on filth; being reborn long afterwards an untouchable. He will belong to this caste regardless of former state and will be blind for more than four times as many years as there are hairs on a cow. He can only expiate his crime by feeding 40,000 Brahmins."

What happens if a Brahmin happens to wound or kill one of the other chaps, "It will suffice to efface the sin if he (the Brahmin) recites the gayatri (a short prayer) 100 times."

With the old man still cackling in a monotone at my side I pattered through the dust to the famed diving well of death and learned that a

gaunt hairless old gnome with the crisp name of Hag Din had just been killed in the ruins because a Japanese tourist paid him 30 cents to jump down the well.

That was Din's job in life. Jumping down wells. He had been jumping down wells for 70 years which is more than three times as long as most people live in India. Din couldn't be happy unless he was jumping down a well and now that he's gone there are still eight withered old boys anxious to prove that the art of well-jumping still survives.

At the risk of turning this into an ancient history lesson here's the debunked dope on Din, Delhi and diving.

Seven separate nations, one by one, swept into India and conquered it. The home town Hindus never have had a chance. They only live here. Six of these nations came sweeping in through the Khyber Pass. England, the seventh, sent a frail bookkeeper named Clive to make their conquest from the sea. Each of the earlier six made his capital in Delhi because Delhi commands the plains. The British, with heroic disregard of fatalism, jinxes and the other hocus pocus, spent a fabulous fortune creating Delhi number seven. It is without doubt the most colossal architectural vista on earth, populated by stuffed shirts in great herds and about as natural as gold teeth.

Lord Willingdon, who now holds the power of life and death over more people than any other

man in the history of time, takes his morning bath near the same spot as Akbar the ambitious took his centuries ago and Willingdon has killed off the sport Akbar started.

Old Akbar, a bloodthirsty baron, had an 80 foot shaft cut in the solid rock surrounding his feudal fort.

The shaft is a bit wider than a fat man and 80 feet is a long way to fall. Halfway down the shaft he had a balcony cut out, lined with marble and equipped with gorgeous furnishings. On days when it got too hot for other sports Akbar would gather up his harem and go down the tunnel. Then he'd order his head hunters to gather in a flock of slaves and make them walk the plank. Akbar was so delighted watching these people fall to their death below, or bouncing with sickening thuds from side to side, that they would sometimes kill 200 or 300 in an afternoon. Just nice clean sport.

One day a lad jumped off, splashed among other bodies in the green water below, climbed out and without much fuss started up again. Akbar was amazed and so grateful he made the lad hop off again. Success; so he had to jump a third time. Right there the art of well-jumping started. From that day to this boys have been training to make this risky plunge into slimy green water far far below.

About fifty years ago somebody started the yarn that the well water was from the Ganges and

the rush to commit suicide in Ganges water grew so big the British stopped all diving and posted troops around the mouth of the hole to hold back the death seekers. Then the 200 lads who earned their living by making the jump successfully pleaded with some rajah for a chance to keep on risking their life and the chance was granted.

Of the 200 just nine remained. Feeble old fellows with glazed half-closed eyes. Eyes that have seen a lot in their time. Today old Din stepped over too far when it came his turn to jump. He fell 40 feet and then bumped the side. That bump hurled him back on the other wall and it was a red tangle that hit the green water.

I sat for hours trying to coax a story from these dried old bones who must have seen so very very much. Some of them actually lived through the mutiny. But they had no story except, "Sahib one time pay ten rupee see man dive. Now sahib only pay one rupee. Why for only one rupee?"

That's all these old boys care about. A chance to show their skill for bigger and better baksheesh. Well, they couldn't get me to jump for all the star sapphires or pigeon blood rubies in this smelly state. And it may just be that I saw the last man dive into Akbar's well of death because India's Gazette which states that Joe McLean has gone on leave, that Harry Fink has been named assistant inspector of milk at Lahore, that Jim Petrie has had a $4 raise and George James had lunch with the viceroy also adds that the viceroy has ordered

all diving stopped and the next man who takes a plunge will go straight to jail. This will be a novelty in India where there are already 160,000 people as guests of the government.

One of these, as you know, is the sainted Gandhi. Recently he stood on a hill overlooking Imperial Delhi and her six ruined forefathers. "And what do you think of it?" the governor asked. "Wonderful," Gandhi said. "Simply wonderful. It will make the greatest ruin of them all."

When I got back to my own diggings a hairy Hindu all done up like the Grand High Potentate of the Punjab was waiting on the threshold. I thought sure he had some message of might for me, but he solemnly announced that he was barber, —"To the excellent gentlemen of this hotel."

He was more erect than a pre-war Prussian guardsman. A huge bristly beard stuck out from his handsome face. He resembled Abyssinia's modest monarch who claims to be king of all the kings.

"Barber?" I asked in dismay. "Yes, sahib. I have been assigned to you. I am ready, sahib." He unstrapped a brace of leather cases and took out enough instruments for a base hospital.

"Who assigned you?" "Your servant, sahib." "Well, he's all wrong, Baron, I go to the barber shop."

His majesty of the shears smiled one of those smiles which say, "tut, tut, my child; Santa Claus

won't come to bad little boys." Then he said: "A misunderstanding, sahib. You see there are no barber shops."

As it turned out the rajah of the razor was quite right. If you crave a head rub in this distant land you make an appointment with one of these wandering shearsmen and he comes to your room or, if you are hard up, you squat at any street corner and have the job done there and then. Bombay, Calcutta and Madras have their barber shops but in the plains there are none.

Practically every corner in the Jhandi Chow bazaar sports a curb barber, doctor, ear cleaner, and chemist. You can get a leg cut off while you wait or have a glass eye fitted in no time. I saw a man get a glass eye one day and a second one get the rotting end of diseased finger nipped off with a pair of scissors.

An open sewer ran along the road where the anatomists were doing their stuff, and if there was one less than a billion flies to the square yard I must be first cousin to the Nyzam of Hyderabad, who is India's richest potentate.

Not only can you get yourself tattooed, shaved, trimmed, operated on, fitted with glasses, teeth, trusses or turquoise tiaras but you can get almost anything on earth made to measure while you squat among the holy heifers and the Brahminee bulls. High boot for example. Any white man going into the jungle without high boots plays hookey from a mausoleum. I had been advised

to wear knee-high leather if I went to Benares and since I plan to go both there and into the Bengal tiger country, thought it worth pricing knee boots.

While in one boot shop—if you can call it "in" —a girl of twenty or so, filthy but good looking, came to buy sandals. This was a great luxury to her, but she dare not, under any condition, enter the sacred presence of the shop. Oh, no. That would contaminate the place. Word of it would spread far and wide and before the merchant could open again he'd have to buy a cow and give it to the temple or kick in with many rupees.

So the girl shouted out her demands while the merchant pretended not to listen. Then he sorted out a cheap bit of junk, told the girl to lay her money on the sidewalk and tossed the sandals out. An assistant scurried out to pick up the square coins. Whether the sandals fitted or not didn't matter a hoot. The girl will probably have them stolen anyhow as she sleeps on an ant-covered slice of sidewalk.

When I barged back from the bazaars the baffled barber was still waiting, but this time he was joined by another imposing gent in silk and fur. This boy had a spiked beard and a long pigtail. Not a short pigtail like bull fighters wear but a long one so that when he dies the goddess of creation can reach down from her place in paradise and jerk this man quickly to her side.

"I have come to look over your clothes," he declared. It all looked like a gag to me and since there were newspapermen in the hotel from seventeen papers I thought they were pulling my leg.

"Well," I said, "the way things are going you'll be able to look them over any day next week in the nearest pawn shop."

"Pawn shop, sahib?" "Yes pawn shop; where men who forget to say no have to leave their clothes."

"You mean sell them, sahib?" "Call it that if you like." "Ah, so the gods favor me. You have clothes to sell." I gave up and unloosened the only Hindustani I have learned. The last word rhymes with jell, well and Nell. It worked.

The flower of India's manhood, the might of India's wealth and the depth of her stuffed shirt flunkeyism rolled in on the capital during my Delhi stay for the conference of princes which annually closes the gaudy social season.

All the nawabs, maharajahs, nyzams, beghums and other perfumed potentates of an incredible empire were there in silks and fine jewels. They ride about in fabulous cars, wear fortunes in gems and raise Cain far into the black night.

The dozen real honest-to-gosh big shots of India have their own marble palaces flanking the viceroy's house and use them once or twice a year. The others stop at the hotel and make the place look like the last act of a stage extravaganza when everybody sings at once.

Tasters and sippers and private medicine men in amazing get-outs clutter up the place. Flunkies of every kind ever invented by a cartoonist with the delirium tremens fall over each other in the corridors. Here is the India of romantic dreams, of golden castles, harems, tiger hunts and treasure chests.

By actual time you can walk from this concentration of extravagance to the reeking filth of starving thousands in four minutes. If the world affords greater contrast I must be Jo Jo the dog-faced boy.

Among other things the invading poobahs have captured every taxi cab in town and since the hotel where I stayed—to get away from the smell—is out in the suburbs, it's a long dusty walk to the main lane.

More or less weary of princes I decided to roam the reeking retail roads one day and managed to catch the eye of a hack driver who put the whip to his starving nag and started off in a blaze of dust. Up the broad trunk road to the Khyber we passed a line of gaudily dressed peasants who had knocked off work to stand all day and cheer the princes from the Punjab, the king of the Kashmir valley, or the beghums of Bhopal and Bengal.

Some of them, having got the habit, even cheered me, a few hissed, one threw a ripe banana and at least fifty gathered around for a ration of baksheesh. The driver put the whip to them unmercifully, but he's a black. If I had struck

one of these diseased wretches I would have been hauled up before a magistrate.

When we came to Cook's office I said, "Stop a minute," and went in for mail. There was one letter and on the desk a copy of the December Canadian National Railways Magazine. My picture was in there with some flattering ballyhoo about my acquaintance with hobos and belted earls—whoever they could be—so I sat down to admire myself in print. Not numbering modesty among my sins I showed the paper to the manager and he was duly impressed. Not everybody goes half way around the earth to see his own picture in the paper. We talked about this, that and the other and when I came out the hack was gone. I looked casually for the thing and then grabbed another.

This chap, like the first, whipped up his horse as though we were going to a fire and went clattering out toward Asia's biggest mosque. We'd gone about a mile when furious yelling came from behind. Three hacks were bearing down like chariots. The drivers chattered like bellicose baboons and I wondered what the uproar was about. My own driver whipped all the harder and it was a glorious race past the red fort of Delhi. A wind from the plains swirled clouds of dust around us and the hack swayed from side to side like a ship in a monsoon.

After another mile one of the howling Hindus managed to get ahead and there he fouled us right

smartly. He cut abruptly across and the two cabs piled up in a tangle. With his whip all ready for action the pursuer rushed over to my driver and chattered like mad. It turned out that he was the original bird who had taken me from the hotel and accused the other of fare jumping. Not ordinary fare jumping either, because a sahib was at stake. That's almost treason; grand larceny at any rate.

To settle the argument I gave each of the yelpers eight cents and walked toward the mosque. India's Mohammedans make plenty of use of their mosques even if they don't bed down a herd of holy heifers. The steps of this place were cluttered up with merchants selling everything from corsets to inner tubes. Twenty goats and one mangy camel surveyed the world peacefully from their corner of the steps. At the top the inevitable group of flea-bitten guides pulled off my shoes, handed me joss sticks and sandals, demanded baksheesh and whisked me inside.

The sight there was one to remember. Twenty thousand men faced the east and bowed in prayer like animated clockwork. Up front on a marble throne the priest droned his sing-song about life and death—"What is written is written." Then he read on from the dog-eared Koran. Nobody can do anything about anything. You live and die exactly the way it is all planned out in the beginning. No wonder these people make no progress in the world. No wonder they crawl

about in filthy hovels. No wonder they suffer from inferiority, lice, starvation and fear of devils. It is written.

I went clutter clutter up and down the aisles of praying men as the loose sandals slapped the floor. Then suddenly four puny little wasted figures barred the way. "We are the priests of Allah," they sang. I'll bet Allah would be mad if he knew it. Hopeless, bony little victims these. Full of ring-worm, rickets and regrets.

"The priests must be paid," they chorused.

"Why?" "We pray for you."

"What for?" "Save sahib from damnation."

"Nonsense, your head priest is just saying what is written is written."

"The house of Allah must be paid."

"All right. I will pay if you take me into the minaret with the muezzin." They pondered over this and finally consulted the man on the great white throne.

As this chap eased his adenoids from that spooky sing-song the long rows of worshippers idly rolled over on their backs and basked in the red hot sun. The priest came to see me. He was a better type. Bigger and clean. He bargained; said I could go up at the 1.30 call to prayer if I'd wear a mask and pay two rupees.

"Why the mask?" "Mask, sahib? Why you will be looking down on the rooftops of Delhi. The rooftops are the quarters of our women. No man may look on our women."

"But I'm an infidel. I don't believe. I don't count. They told me that in Morocco and Egypt and Arabia."

Finally it was arranged that I go up in the high tower overlooking Imperial Delhi and her six ruined predecessors. It was a long and stifling hot climb inside the wall. Once I thought I'd never get up, but at last I came out on the tiny platform near the spot where the muezzin lived. He was blind. All muezzins are blind. If not they might look down and see the face of some woman. That would never do.

As we waited the great dusty square before the mosque gradually filled and the city was hushed. The few Hindus in the gang discreetly withdrew.

The wrinkled little man had a watch with raised numbers he could feel. The watch had chimes on it too and when these tinkled he got up, felt his way to the short red balcony and wailed his age-old call: "Allah. Allah akbar—" the rest of it trailed off in the dust as the multitude below touched their brown foreheads to the smelly sands.

BABOONS, CROCODILES AND GOLF

A CHANCE meeting with the fastest driving army officer in North India introduced me to baboon hunting, golf where the greens are red, and an early morning view of Agra's justly famed Taj Mahal.

It was mail day at Maiden's and there was a hefty batch of interesting home gossip to be digested. So much that I read as I walked instead of watching the road. A low green Buick zoomed around a corner, kicked up a cloud of dust as the brakes bit and hoisted me accurately into a hedge. The driver, fat and noisy, got out to survey the damage and, finding there was none, he swore mightily. That started us along the road of friendship. After lunch we ran out beyond Delhi's ruins to the only golf links I've seen where you can get 125 yards with a putter.

Golf in this pagan peninsular is something to write home about. For example you have three caddies. The total cost of the three is sixteen cents for eighteen holes and you don't give a tip. At 100 degrees in the shade three caddies are necessary.

The first carries your bag. He's the boss caddy,

usually the assistants are his sons. For eighteen holes he gets four annas or eight cents and thinks himself lucky. The first assistant caddy gets himself well up the fairway to see where the ball lands. If it goes into the rough—as mine invariably do—he shoots ahead to drive snakes away. In case you happen to be right in the cobra belt this ball hunting caddy will have a mongoose on a string and when the ball hits the rough he sends the snake killer into the long grass first and follows it up himself. By the time the sahib comes up the place should be reasonably free of vipers, but you can't be too sure. You pay an extra two cents for the mongoose.

The third caddy is usually a tall, weedy Hindu who trails along holding an umbrella over your head. He gets four cents for eighteen holes. If a ball gets lost all three caddies put on a big league hunt, because the cost of one ball will hire 30 caddies for a whole day.

I managed to do the Old Delhi course in 109 and pals will assure you I was shooting far over my head. But I can imagine some of you home-town divot-diggers on this course. First time you try to get under a ball you'll snap a shaft so fast you'll wonder what happened because the ground is just three degrees softer than granite. Then if you happen to make an accurate pitch to the "green" and land there you're sure to bounce on for another fifty yards.

The ground around Delhi is brick red and

almost red hot. The bunkers are a slightly lighter shade of red and sometimes sport a polite little warning. "Beware of Snakes." Just a nice gentle hint. The green itself is just nothing. You tell it from the rest of the course because it has a little sand sprinkled on top. It's fine gritty sand and gets into your eyes when the winds blow hard. If you touch your putt a bit hard the ball will roll ten or twelve feet beyond the cup, but since the ground is made to slope a bit, it will usually come back and sometimes you can ram her down on the rebound. Golf, and how! Usually it's bad form to pick a ball out of the cup by the hand route, because scorpions like the shadowy inside of the hole and the sting of the scorpion often means death. However, the sahib doesn't need to bother about that, because he never picks up his ball anyhow. Caddies come cheap enough and if a snake or scorpion happens to do one in you whistle for another. Why worry when there are 390,000,000 people here?

Some of the holes on the Old Delhi course have you driving straight across the road. If you should bean a passer-by you look to see if he's white or not before apologizing. If he's white—which he probably isn't—you say "sorry, old chap", or something like that. If he's brown you have the caddies insult him for stopping your shot. All rather complicated.

Tennis is another game you play completely surrounded by servants. There are any number of

free courts in the parks which abound in Delhi. You have a servant set up a net and take the racquets before you wish to go, hire pick-up boys and carry on. Should natives be using the court when you get down and there is no other available you just tell them to get on their horse and they have to clear off. In caste the white man is lower than the dogs. In authority he's higher than the gods.

Pick-up boys get a half cent a set. If you play three sets and use two ball chasers on each side of the net it costs six cents, which isn't so bad. Your own servant sets up the net and takes down the racquets. If you wish to rest during the game punka wallahs will rally round with fabulous fans of peacock feathers and do your cooling off at two cents an hour.

I watched a sort of la-de-da match coming back from golf, which was momentarily interrupted by a long yellowish snake invading the court. The girl who was playing finished out her volley and then said, "Take the snake away, Joma," so Joma took it away. Less excitement than pouring a cup of tea.

Back at the farm and fireside I hopped into a shower, dried with a coarse towel and sprawled naked under a fan planning a descent on Agra with the fast driving officer. A bearded "boy" pattered in with a tray of toast and tea. Life seemed pretty sweet just then and I said, "Narayan; pack up, we leave in the morning before dawn."

"Where go, master?" "South; Agra, Cawn-

pore, Lucknow, Benares, Calcutta." "Can't go, master. All dhobie man on strike. Much trouble about Mr. Gandhi."

"Well, who cares? We go to Agra."

"No, master; all clean shirt, all clean underwear with dhobie man. No can go till get him back. All Hindu man have big parade to-day. Make much noise."

"Well then you get it back unwashed and we'll have it done some other place. The idea is we're leaving for the south in the morning."

He pattered away in his bony bare feet and came back with a great bundle of shirts and socks and suits. Around the arm-pits of one white shirt and one suit was a spreading yellow stain as if somebody had dropped a bottle of iodine.

"What's all this?" I asked. "Sahib's suit."

"Sure, but these stains—what are they?" "From the wedding, sahib."

"The wedding? What wedding? Where?" "Sister have daughter, sahib. Daughter get married. Have big wedding. Two Brahmin come. Many people eat."

"But let's pull ourselves together, man; is this my suit, or isn't it my suit?" "Your suit, sahib."

"Well, where does that come in on a wedding?" "I lend master's suit. Master not use him. Bridegroom he have no suit. I am uncle of bride."

"Oh, so that's the idea. You lend my clothes when I don't wear them?" "Just big time, sahib. Two Brahmin come. Must have fine suit."

"And this yellow stain—I suppose that's betel nut?" "Yes, sahib. Much nut at big wedding. Two Brahmin come."

"Then it won't come out?" "Oh yes, sahib. I bleach him out." "Yes you will; with a pair of scissors."

I read the riot act in capital letters, dressed and went outside. India had suddenly become the India of the story books and the movies. Vast parades of people in amazing colors went past. Beautiful silks on even the lowliest peons, clinking gold on the courtesans and ladies of light virtue.

Families were streaming down the roads in clinking procession. Clinking because the women wore from two to twenty bracelets on each ankle and just as many around their necks. They had big shawls over their heads and most of them carried babies.

The men were painted all sorts of colors but mostly yellow. They had either grossly indecent designs on their foreheads or strings of painted manure around their skinny necks. Some of the women had a monkey crudely drawn on their foreheads but most of them just wore a bright red spot in the middle. This is supposed to represent the male sexual organ; an object of adoration throughout India.

Bands clashed by playing "The Wearing of the Green", which is the national anthem of Independent India. Once a group of scarecrows went by tooting "Cock of the North" on dilapidated

bagpipes. Luckily the drums almost drowned out the pipers.

I joined the seething mass wondering where we were going. We turned off the sun-baked road through a big white gate and down an alley of palms.

For a mile I was carried along through beautiful gardens while children threw rose and marigold petals on the walks. The wild drum stopped in here and all you could hear was the merry jingle of bangled ankles and the patter of bare feet in the red dust.

The scene suddenly shifted. There were rows of rotting beggars. Quite literally rotting there in the sun. They stretched out their arms, if they had any, in an arrogant plea for money.

Others sat behind piles of fly-covered candies, nuts, gooey looking pancakes, bars of soap, occasional toys. A man made up to mock the whites went by and slung insults at me while the crowd jeered. His face was covered with flour or something, he wore a vast sun helmet big enough for a team of horses and stepped along with a ferocious scowl. He was a pretty good mimic.

The jingling mob stopped here and there to feed things from paper parcels to the sacred cows who seemed to know something special was up and swarmed the place. In a grove of iron gray banyan trees were the sadhus, yogis, gurus, Jobner Gypsies and other holy men sprawled on beds of sharpened spikes, sitting on cactus leaves, dancing

on glass, smearing themselves in manure and blood. Doing all the idiotic things which make a madman holy in this insane land. The holy men cursed me soundly. Just sat there on their spikes or cactus and raved. Who wouldn't?

Beyond the grove of trees was the Jumna. The river is clean here and fast-running with a good beach. It was a savage but beautiful sight to see these tens of thousands strip off except for a rag, wash first their clothes and then themselves, and drink great gulps of the water scooped up either in their hands or in the brass bowls they carried. These bowls, if you're curious, take the place of toilet paper in India.

The women bathed in a separate part of the stream and I was angrily driven away when I got near that spot. Except for that incident the people were friendly and rather childish. As a rule no white man comes within miles of these affairs and sometimes, when they try it, there is uproar in a big way.

As the men came out of the stream again they climbed, dripping, up the bank and picked out the master painter who was dobbing them up in respect to caste. The sex crowd went to the sex painter who quickly drew the caste mark on their heads. The shavers saw the barber who scraped their skulls, the men who worship Kali, the killer, went to a man of Kali, who daubed them up. All told there were perhaps a dozen men there busy painting caste marks on heads.

After they were dried out and caste marked again the mob usually sat around a chap who droned away from the Brahminee Bible. It was really a beautiful picture of life in the raw. The water was clean as anybody could wish and the banks were lined with waving rows of coco-nut palm and hollyhocks. The hollyhocks were often ten feet high with amazing blooms.

Except for the half-mile passage through the lepers and beggars the whole thing was beautiful in a crude but natural way. Just what good all this will do Mr. Gandhi is beyond me but in the meantime I'm shy one $2 shirt just because it happened to fit a Hindu hubby.

I was up with the early green parrots next morning; joined the roly-poly rifleman with the low green car, sent my bearer on by train with the luggage, and rolled down to the torrid town of the Taj Mahal.

A hundred and fifty miles before breakfast is smart motoring in any man's country. When part of that distance is threaded through buffalo herds, goat flocks, camel caravans and bellowing baboons you'll realize we must have been squashing the old gas button the rest of the way and that the roads were good.

With the long green car loaded with one tin bathtub, two beds, three rifles, a radio, seven suitcases, three servants, a typewriter, three two-gallon water jars, high snake boots, spare gas and oil tanks, four extra tires and a medicine kit fit for a

hospital, we rolled out of Delhi at 6.20 with the sun just creeping across the plain in time to spy on the home towners taking their bath on the front porch. If you ever want to see a world without privacy take a dawn patrol through the back alleys of India. Boudoir scenes is what I mean!

We sped down a ribbon of red concrete at 70. The silvery grandeur of New Delhi where white sahibs rule the roost in boiled shirts gave way to the skeleton remains of the once mighty moguls. Ruins were everywhere. With a broad sweep in the direction of Lord Willingdon's fabulous palace the Rajputani rifleman sneered, "Twenty years more and that will be the biggest ruin of them all. Twenty years and we white men will be swept into blood red oblivion."

I might have started an argument but at that moment we swept around a bend into a hundred or more monkeys. They scampered pell-mell for the trees, but one was too slow and met a noisy death.

If he's been a naughty monkey he'll probably come back to life as a Hindu.

We roared down to the red road like a juggernaut and killed at least a dozen parrots the first hour. Hundreds of green parrots, gray ones, and now and again a crimson, were feeding on the road. They must be near sighted or something, because they made no effort to get away until we were on them and practically every covey left a

quivering victim on the road. Once a pair were swept right into the car. I grabbed one and he nipped my finger till it bled and then screamed in defiance till I let him go again.

The farther south we went the thicker the jungle land and the bigger the baboons. From skinny little runts the size of a cat they got bigger and bigger till we were among white-fanged brutes who looked for trouble, and barked like dogs.

Forced to a stop by a bunch of young camels once we became surrounded by these fierce gray fighters. Long-haired they were with vicious faces. They stood screaming and leaping all about the machine.

"You a good shot?" the Raj asked. "Not with a pistol."

"Try it, anyway," he urged. "Then we'll have to fly. Get that old battler with his ears off."

He pointed to as fiendish a looking baboon as I ever hope to see. The pistol jumped as I let fly but I caught the brute in the upper chest and downed him. The bedlam that broke was appalling. Female baboons came leaping to tear us to shreds as we roared away in second gear. The speed of these monks puzzled us too, and I thought sure a couple were going to be into the open car before we could get away. The camels were still ahead but over at the side of the road. If the slobbering brutes happened to swerve out now we were in for a nice spot of fighting. They held their place though and we zoomed down the miles

and miles of monkeys. The Raj was a professional hunter hurrying south to pick up a party of white men after tiger. "No tiger here," he said. "But we're in the leopard country. We may see one."

Three times we started wild boar into action. They were ugly-looking beasts with long tusks and peroxide blonde hair dangling from their chins. They seemed to be sleeping or wallowing in the ditches and when we scared them out they'd race the car for a half mile or so before galloping off into the elephant grass.

A scarlet gate drawn over a level crossing stopped us near a bridge so I loaded one of the rifles. It was a high velocity .27 with a jolt like a howitzer and a shell about the length of a fountain pen.

"If we see a leopard he's mine," I told the chikar (hunter). "Bet five rupees you couldn't bring one down," he scoffed.

"You show the leopard and watch," I bragged.

We sat there impatiently with the gate down but nothing happened. We just sat there. Furious tooting of the horn brought no response so we got out, put up the gate and pushed on. Just one of those things. One mile farther and we swung off over a caravan trail, down a valley and out across the snow white sands of the Jumna.

"Just got time for a mugger," the Raj exclaimed. He loaded his rifle and we sent the servants ahead to see what was around. The Raj gave me the dope on shooting crocodiles. "Only place

to get mugger is in the neck," he said. "Bump them just back of the head."

"But they only stick their snouts out of water." "Water be hanged. You shoot mugger on the bank. Only fools waste shell on swimming mugger."

The men up front tipped us that there were a few on our side of the bank and dozens across river.

The yellow grass was neck high, giving good protection and the sand deadened our footsteps so it was pie to creep up within 50 yards of the crocodiles, which lay in a bunch. I was pretty uneasy about snakes as we picked a path through the grass because I had bare legs and low shoes but the gun-bearer in the lead had a shot gun cocked in case any pythons got fresh.

"That third one by the stone; he's a good target," the Raj said. "Just back of the neck now. You try to get him and I'll shoot as they head for the water."

I squatted on one knee, drew an ivory bead on the fatal neck spot and nearly turned a back flip as the rifle went off like a cannon. I hit the big scaly brute on his hard snout and the whole slinking mass ducked for the water like sprinters. The one I had beaned raised himself on his tail and opened his saw teeth mouth. The Rajputani's rifle sang out twice and the mugger showed his white belly to the sun as he kicked feebly and died.

"Great stuff," I said. "How do we get over

to get him ? " " Get him ?—We don't get him. Let's move."

The other crocodiles were lifting their snouts from the river one by one and I was all for pot-shooting them, but the professional would have none of this. We kept the rifles on the alert back to the main road hoping to spot a leopard or a black panther, but there were only monkeys. Thousands of monkeys.

We rolled in to Agra before ten and found the town of the Taj swarmed with mosquitoes and tourists but otherwise interesting.

HELLO SUCKER

AND here's Agra the sucker centre of all Asia. The torrid town of the Taj Mahal still swarms with sweating sightseers despite depression, diving dividends and portable plumbing.

One glimpse of the most perfect tomb the world has ever known is worth all the pestering, pilfering and stomach somersaults you've endured to get here. The appeal to the eye is irresistible, sensational, magnetic and any other four dollar word you can dig up. After the filth, squalor and uproar of outer India it's more restful than a double dose of sleeping powder. But you've read all this before.

Ten minutes after I put up at a back alley bungalow disguised as the best hotel in town, half the snake charmers, sword swallowers, fire eaters, tiger tamers and crystal gazers in India stormed the front porch, bowed in salaam and proceeded to do tricks.

A hawk-eyed Afghan shouldered the others aside by right of his six foot four and blandly dropped a python sixteen feet long on the carpet. If you haven't got much to do right now measure off sixteen feet and see how it looks.

"Rosie," the Afghan announced. "This snake Rosie; harmless snake. Very friendly. Master put Rosie around his neck and we take picture." Just a nice friendly kidder from the Khyber.

Another man had cobras. I could smell them. They smell fishy. He started his weird exciting piping, undid the crimson package and popped out his black-hooded killers. A boy of ten or so spun a rope and it stood erect in the room. "Turn rope into tree," he promised. Another tossed me a purse full of rupees. "All yours if you can open the purse," he said. The thing looked too easy for words, but the boy baffled me in less time than it took to jump from the python.

I probably would have been snared in the web of these mesmerists, but at that moment a great black carriage with plumed horses drew up at the gate, two attendants in turbans of scarlet and indigo came down from their high seat, bowed till their heads touched the floor and announced in sepulchral tones "Victoria for Sinclair Sahib".

"Victoria—sure it's not a hearse?" They were silent. The crimson plumes shook as the horses whisked flies away. The fire eaters started fire eating again and then, lordly and proud, came my gaunt Gurkha. The Victoria was his doing. His master was a big hooper dooper from over the seas and his master was going to see the Taj Mahal in state. Yes, sir!

He turned cold eyes on the mesmerists and scattered them like the winds. Even the Afghan

trembles when the Gurkha says scram. I was glad I had this silent fellow with the long hooked knife.

I got into the great carriage. A tourist took a movie of me as we rolled out the gate. He probably thought I was the Nawab of Port Credit on an inspection tour; or something.

The team clattered down half-deserted streets because it was mid-day at 103 in the shade. We rolled dustily under a red stone arch, through a courtyard filled with fez-topped guides and stopped in the shade of a banyan tree. The Gurkha, silent and proud, walked behind me and as the withered old guards at the edge of the outer gate closed in for baksheesh he swept them away with a promise to open their veins if they even spoke to me. A dozen steps under a red arch filled with the buzz of honey bees and there was the tomb of an Indian empress pearly white in the blazing sun. It was magnificent beyond any feeble word of mine.

Friends who had read Richard Haliburton's "Royal Road to Romance" had often scoffed at that gay adventurer's description of the Taj, for he claimed to have hidden behind a cypress tree until chowkidars had locked the outer gates and then, with the place all to himself, he swam in the lotus-filled pool.

"Bologney," these friends scoffed. "It's only three inches deep. He'd have to be a Dover sole to swim there."

Sure enough there was only room for an adolescent tadpole in that pond, so faith in Haliburton

did a nose dive until I reached a flat marble bench conveniently placed in the centre for folks to be photographed on. There, abaft the bench, was a pool deep enough for anybody except Primo Carnera to swim in. However, that's only a one to one tie for Haliburton because his ballyhoo about hiding in the garden until midnight is bunk. Anybody can go in at any hour of the day or night if they want to kick in with a few annas by way of a bribe.

I sauntered up around the pearly whiteness of the Moghul triumph, wondering what I was going to do in the place. No sense writing a guide-book palaver about how much the marble mausoleum cost or who built it or why. That's in every library on earth.

I leaned over the narrow back balcony. The Jumna twisted in a sandy crescent below. It was filled with water, sewage, turtles, sand, crocodiles and snakes in that order. There were hundreds of greasy grayish turtles dawdling up and down. I could only see two crocodile snouts and no snakes. The turtles in their languid meandering suggested an idea. Why not try a bit of reptile hunting from the minaret of the famed Taj?

I twisted around and around the spiral staircase to the top of that marble shaft on the river side of the Taj. The turtles were a long way down and I only had a pistol. The whole Taj Mahal was empty and deserted in the white blaze of the sun. I snapped in a clip of seven shells, rested

against the shelf inlaid with verses from the Koran and squeezed the trigger, Ping! The shot echoed half way across Agra. I missed the turtles by a full yard. Ping! Ping! Two more shots went down and sent up a cloud of spray with a plump. Rotten shooting. I was nowhere near. I tried two more and was still a yard off.

Wheezy old watchmen, leaning heavily on canes, came clattering down the great central corridor between the cypress trees trying to see who was shooting up the Taj. They bellowed exciting things to each other, circled the place, gathered in a group and talked it over. I was perched seventy-five feet up taking in the amazing view. I stayed nearly an hour. The chowkidars withdrew one by one, but I hung on to my eagle perch in the minaret until a group of sightseers came up to look around. When they went down I joined the parade—nobody molested me, or spoke a word.

I strolled up that marvellous tree-lined boulevard and out through the honey-bee gate again where the guardian Gurkha was stolidly holding the only shaded bit of parking place in the square. We clattered under the high red arch again and back to the sword swallowers for an afternoon sleep.

Every day during my five in Agra, I stood in renewed amazement before the beautiful Taj but that was pretty much a waste of time. There was really more fun on the hotel porch. Tourists were there on their ten day triangular tour of India—

Bombay to Delhi, Agra, Benares and back to Bombay. What they didn't know about India would fill a dozen books. I'm no expert myself but I sure got a kick out of listening to that worried mob.

I used to duck away to the fort and sit laughing to myself on that fabulous black throne where the builder of the Taj sat watching 2,000 workmen fabricate that fine building. The throne was big enough for 20 ordinary men but since the mighty moghuls who captured the Khyber and looted the plains were not ordinary men everything was peaches and cream. What ordinary bozo could support 395 wives? Or was it 495?

One afternoon I sat there pondering the distant problem of 395 wives and the immediate current problem of money. Banks had been closed several days and I was broke. This seemed to spoil the whole afternoon for one follower of Mohammed who, with his four wives and nine children, was the only other visitor. The muslim and his harem were a happy family in the big courtyard when I arrived. Wearing tennis shoes I was close to them before the women spied me. They screamed and rushed to a corner where they covered their faces in suffocating shawls. Even the older girls—about seven and nine—got excited as this infidel invader looked on their naked faces. One commenced to cry, ran to her mother, got the wrong one and then bawled mightily.

The group withdrew then leaving the amazing

mosque to me. It was a place of beauty and romance. An old man followed by fifty chipmunks came over and told me I'd have to take my shoes off because I was in Allah's holy garden. "Wrong," I said. "The Garden of Allah is in Africa. I've been there—and didn't take my shoes off."

"I'm older than you are," he said as if that settled everything. He turned to feed rice to his army of chipmunks, so I took my shoes off and continued to squat on the big black throne.

Tiring of the silvery view of the Taj, I prowled the countless audience halls and minarets in this vast ruin. About every fourth turn I'd come within sight of the Mohammedan and his mammas again. They'd scurry pell mell around the next bend and come back with their faces all bandaged up again. It was tough for them. If you happen to be the sort of person who can take your ruins seriously it's no fun looking at them through a towel. Eventually I cleared off and left Abdul with his annoyed quartet.

The bazaars of Agra, after the teeming ferocity of Peshawar and Lahore, were tame and dull and boring. The tourists back at the bungalow were worse so I decided to light out for Lucknow.

The big problem was to pay my bill. The manager wouldn't cash a traveller's cheque. He didn't know who would. He thought I'd better stay. But Agra bored me. The sheep-faced tourists got under my skin. A tourist is the bird who gets

surrounded by men trying to sell what he doesn't want and buys it.

He starts out by saying no, he doesn't want it because. . . . Why the because? It means defeat. You're licked at once. You are explaining. Only people in wrong explain. I've had years of experience with these vicious vendors and if I didn't say "No" and mean just exactly that I'd be cabling home for money every month.

With the suckers on all sides I strolled to the stables and found my Gurkha. "Got any money?" He had six rupees. The bill was fifty-two. I outlined our financial problem and he listened soberly like a juror. "I get money," he promised. Stretching his yellow hide he stalked away, the spirit of destiny, and came back in an hour with fifty-two rupees.

"Not enough," I said, "but where did you get it?"

"Gurkha man here. Gurkha man always lend other Gurkha man." I wasn't so sure about this. I thought that knife might have been laid against somebody's ribs, but said nothing. It was my turn. With forty of the fifty-two rupees in my hand I set out to chisel the bill down. The manager argued and whined and threatened, but I managed to get a clear receipt for forty. With the remaining sixty cents and lots of threats we engaged a luggage truck and coolies to handle the travel load and finally got aboard the southbound Punjab mail.

That ride easily earns the ink-flavored cheese wafer as the worst on record. It landed me dirty, tired and hungry in India's fanatical city of men without women. A city of beauty and cleanliness.

In Lucknow they have plumbing which does not move in and out the back door three times a day, broad tree-lined avenues free of holy heifers, water fit for human interiors and soda fountains where you can actually buy ginger ale.

There are taxi cabs, bookshops, banks, factories, golf clubs, bars and built-in bath tubs. Some of the men even tuck their shirt tails in and look like comedians in derby hats. Snake charmers don't unwind sausage rolls of cobra every time you turn a corner and the wild drums only throb at sunset.

It's all very different and very masculine. The ladies of Lucknow practise the strictest purdah east of Mecca and except for whites or untouchables you could walk all afternoon without spotting a feminine face or figure.

Dinky little carts like racing sulkies gallop musically up and down the roads. Perched precariously on the back of these is a red box and inside is a woman. The wonder to me is that she doesn't do a flip out the back door when the horse jerks to a stop and how she doesn't roast to death on long hops. But she doesn't, and you or I or Hector the iceman never sees her.

Merchants, taxi drivers, cops, bookkeepers, story-tellers and others above the mill run in the social scale have two to four wives apiece

and bundle the whole quartet into that little box when it comes time to visit Aunt Susie or the movies. At the movies every family is screened off from the next one so that no man dare look at what his neighbor picked as bride.

Even little girls of six or seven go about with their faces hidden under crimson saris and ride in stuffy boxes; for here is India under the sway of Allah.

I walked the three miles between station and Residency on arrival without seeing a single female except undraped untouchables. Ahead of me was a Brahmin, lordly and proud. He was carrying a gaudy parasol and at one turn of the road spotted an untouchable woman innocently feeding crumbs to monkeys. He bellowed at the top of his croaky voice and the woman scampered away like the monkeys until she had reached ninety feet. Then she yelled back that all was safe and the Brahmin stalked past.

Had she come within ninety feet he would have been polluted, would have to shed every stitch of clothes he wore and burn them. It's so stupid a democratic invader like me feels like socking somebody for no good reason at all. The woman, of course, has a perfect right on the sidewalk. She could tell the Brahmin to go out in the garden and eat worms—as our women would undoubtedly do—but she submits to the superiority of this most powerful priesthood the world has known and grovels in the dust at the sight of a high caste.

When the half-naked priest hesitated to bay at the woman I nearly caught up with him. He spied me over his shoulder and started away at the double. If my shadow had fallen across his path it would have meant some sort of disgrace so I made life uncomfortable for the old boy walking just as fast as he did. Finally he cut across a field, gave me a fiendish glare and marched on, leaving the road to me and the monkeys. We were the only things foolish enough to walk in the noon heat.

I came to the Residency, the only spot in the world where the British flag flies night and day, rain or shine, winter or summer. Here on a squat sun-baked hill a handful of Britons stood off 40,000 well-armed rebels for five months in 1857 and broke the Indian mutiny. The English held the fort but the Scotsmen relieved them and crushed the mutiny.

Just in case this makes the hairy sons of the Clan Campbell get cocky and recall that the music they played that hot day of victory was "The Campbells are Coming," I stand on my hind legs to announce that there were seven more Sinclairs in that relieving army than there were Campbells. If you don't believe it go on over and count for yourself, you black-haired haggis hoisters from the highlands.

So much for history and the Campbells. The tricky sight for me was a heroic son of Allah just back from Mecca, having his beard dyed crimson

in the shadow of the bullet-pocked compound. No real honest to gosh Mohammedan of India would dare shave his beard. Some of them stick out like palm trees gone to seed and those who have been to Mecca are always crimson.

This mighty man had just come back from his pilgrimage and was the centre of an admiring throng who pleaded for a chance to dab on some of the dye. He could have charged a dime for the privilege and made his expenses. If you or I set out from Lucknow to Mecca we'd raid the bank roll for $300 but holy pilgrims who eat rice and sleep in a bale of rope do it for about $8.98 and talk about the experience from that day forward.

The heat shimmered across the mound as a batch of tourists in sun glasses and the kind of tropical kit you see in magazines drove up, met the inevitable guide and submitted to the inevitable lecture. Some people can't be happy without their daily lecture in the midst of some ancient ruin. Some day I'm going to do a treatise on "Efficiency in Tomb and Ruin Gazing" and make a fortune. All you have to do is to be profound, hopelessly involved and wordily inaccurate.

I was still flat broke and the banks were still closed over the Easter vacation so it looked as if somebody would have to do a second relief of Lucknow. I appealed twice to the hotel manager, showed him a letter of credit worth thousands

of rupees and asked for a mere twenty. He said, nothing doing. Sorry, but nothing doing. On the second time I never got beyond the servant.

Things looked bad because I was as hungry as a lone wolf. In the end I thought of a formal looking letter of introduction given me by the Mayor of Toronto and with the imposing red seal on that managed to bag ten chips and bear down at once on a beanery.

Eating in India has a science all its own like kissing in the moonlight or dribbling a downhill putt. You scoop up a spoonful of curry, dunk it in the chutney and take quick aim for the mouth. Before burning to a crisp you gulp a mug of water, sigh and start all over again. After a pound or so of curry 109 in the shade seems like a cool spring day. So long as the water holds out you live.

After to-day's mess of curry I sat pawing through a week old paper and found a reward offer of $500 to any man, woman or child who could do the much ballyhooed Indian rope trick.

"This amount will never be claimed," the paper declared, "because there is no rope trick, never was a rope trick and never will be. Like Mary's little lamb there simply ain't no such animal."

The paper is probably right too, because no Hindu could even dream of $500 without swooning. I looked around at India as it passed on the

hoof and suddenly discovered that India isn't the turbaned land of romance we thought it was either. Turbans! Who says Indians wear turbans? They don't any more than our Indians at home wear feathers.

I ticked off the first 25 men to pass. Here's the score: Fez 11, turban 5, sun helmet 5, Gandhi cap 2, Punjab cap 1, bareheaded 1. The Indian doesn't wear the turban because he can't be bothered winding, unwinding and washing the thing every day. In Bombay the three-cornered Gandhi cap outstrips all others combined and up in Poona, where Mr. Gandhi is locked up, they wear nothing else. The dashing young blades of Lahore sport lids like Happy Hooligan tin cans, while up on the Afghan frontier the man of fashion runs around in a pea-scooper. Turbans be hanged.

Another thing is elephants. After seven weeks in India I had never seen one. The nearest I got to one was the pound at Agra where a stray elephant was locked up the way we'd lock up a stray pooch. From Bombay to the Khyber and back down to the Ganges I haven't seen tusk nor tail of an elephant. I haven't even seen a stuffed elephant or the picture of an elephant.

For weeks as I steamed here a lecturer warned tourists never, never, never to drink the water, eat the ice cream, taste raw fruit or vegetables, clean your teeth in tap water, sleep without a mosquito net or walk in a garden at night without a flashlight. I've done every single one of those

"don'ts" and if I felt any better they'd have to tie me down.

If I can find bottled water I do, but I'm dog-goned if I'll clean my teeth in beer. If the tomatoes and strawberries taste good I eat them. Why not? What you don't know can't hurt you.

I know the kitchens where most of the stuff is cooked are alive with rats, and roaches and bugs, but what am I going to do about that? Go hungry, or eat from a tin, or come home like a cry baby? The fact is that after seven winter weeks I feel good, but letters from home tell me my lads have colds and half the boys at the office have been away with 'flu or grippe or sore throat.

But here I am eating food cooked in water from sewer-filled streams, drinking that water, breathing dust which always includes the ash from human bodies, getting bitten by malaria mosquitoes every night of the week, travelling in flea-filled railway cars and sleeping in beds that are the regular home of enough bugs to fill a quart sealer. Yet I feel like a million dollars. The idea seems to be that if you've only one thing to worry about you do it, but when they come crowding in right and left you laugh them all off.

A newspaperman who has done several excellent series for his paper was in Delhi when I arrived there. He'd had three experiences with snakes and these shattered his nerves. He hadn't been bitten or even attacked, but he dreamed snakes and talked

snakes. He finally collapsed so completely they had to send him home with a guardian. His last official act was to describe a fiendish attack on a Delhi bazaar by a man-eating tiger which . . . "failing to slaughter any children on the streets actually tore up the tram-car rails in its rage."

You're entitled to believe it or call me a dirty name, but his home paper actually printed this.

Well, snakes are certainly a menace throughout India. The worst of all is the krait, which is about one foot long. None of his victims live more than 100 seconds. As I came into the hotel yesterday a snake about nine inches long was on the path. I carried a small whip with me and killed him. I don't know what he was, but he might have been a krait. In to-day's paper is this casual item. "Cobras killed three people in Lucknow over the week-end. The most unusual victim was Lalla Ram, a Bengali living in Major Rd., who set a rat trap in the courtyard of his house, and shortly after dusk found two mice entrapped. After killing them he again laid the trap, and a few minutes later heard the jaws fall. Thinking he had caught more mice, he lifted the trap and was carrying it to the road to kill the rodents when he was bitten on the hand. He had been bitten by a cobra that had been caught in the trap."

The man died within an hour.

Now I'm living in Major Rd. and there are still

plenty of hungry cobras about. What am I going to do about all this? Why I'm going to the movies and to-morrow we invade Benares, the holy city. And what a spot that Benares is!

HOME OF HYSTERIA

PILES of human corpses sizzle and burn in a rosy glow night and day. Long rows of leathery looking women with shaved skulls dangle skinny legs in the Ganges and beg forgiveness from the hideous sin of being widows.

Bodies of tiny, underfed children float down stream. Victims of plague are hastily dumped in to join them in the current. A few miles below town they will be fought over and devoured by giant turtles and fat mussy crocodiles. Gongs and cymbals clash and boom in the temples all day as fresh bodies come to the eternal fire.

This is Benares. The holy city of India. Holy to Hindus and Buddhists, but just a pain in the gizzard to me. More than 500,000,000 people pray every day of their lives that they may die in Benares. Black and yellow men do this. Here's luck to them.

You smell Benares when it's still five miles away. A pungent sickening smell of singeing hair and scorching meat. It woke me from a bumpy afternoon sleep with a feeling of suffocation. The long red train came to a smooth stop and I tumbled out to be followed by the wildest and woolliest pas-

senger list I ever hope to see. Fakirs, jugglers, fire eaters, snake charmers, sword swallowers, lepers, poison drinkers, dying men on stretchers. Some bore no resemblance to human beings. The train whistled in shrill protest against being delayed in this home of black magic.

I stood flabbergasted on the sun-baked platform. All the freaks of all the sideshows in the world were handsome Romeos compared to these painted fiends who had come to bathe in Mother Ganges and otherwise go on a paganistic spree. They had come because it is written that, " Mother Ganges purifies and makes whole everything it touches instantly; but nothing on earth can ever foul it." That sounds silly but the purity of Ganges' water has baffled scientists for years.

Little girls wearing a silver heart on a string as boast that they were virgins played about the place naked. Holy men, pot bellied, ash smeared, smelly, stood with their hands in the air. A man hung by his feet from a banyan tree and shrieked for alms. He hangs there every day for five hours. Just nice clean sport. Boys singled me out as a likely sucker and filled my hands with the most obscene pictures I ever saw. But every single picture was taken in a temple. Other men sprawled on stones playing stretching and twisting their own entrails.

I looked for my gaunt Gurkha and found him in the inevitable argument. His idea of a good time is to hire a half dozen coolies to carry my luggage,

get it all neatly stored somewhere, then drag out his knife and shout: "Scram, you bimbos. Get going." Half the time this fiendish glare does make them scram so he grins boyishly and pockets the money. Jesse James wore a mask.

We finally rolled away from the field of freaks through a drab cantonment to the outskirts of town where the smell is not so bad. Only nine whites live in Benares and here, within snake-proof walls, is their headquarters. One of the men is a government monkey catcher—no fooling; and three of the others are Scotsmen. You've guessed already that Benares has a Caledonian Society.

They parked me in a bungalow surrounded by banana trees.

That was a bad move because the trees swarmed monkeys and every time I'd open the door the monks would come galloping in. It was like an old-time surprise party only the monks didn't bring their own peanuts. There was a sign on the wall warning visitors not to put out the light at night and a moving picture. Moving was right. It had been a painting, but was now crawling with maggots and white ants. The floor of the room was concrete full of cracks, so I took the precaution of pouring water down the biggest cracks and when no scorpions came out I figured that was safe.

I asked the Gurkha to find out about this light gag. Electricity is costly in Hindustan and the

tourist business is all shot. Then why tell you to keep the lights on all night? He wasn't long finding out. "Some snake," he said laconically and dismissed the whole thing from his mind.

We climbed into a two-wheeled cart after a wash-up and rolled down to the magnificent crescent sweep of the Ganges. The view from a boat in the river was beautiful but startling. Now, in late afternoon there were few bathers. Just the long row of women beseeching forgiveness and a few boys drinking in the shadow of a vast and thick sewer. They seemed to enjoy the thick gooey water.

A talkative Hindu who had fastened himself on me like a leech scooped up a glass of river water and held it to the sun. It was thicker than soup. Not a bit of light came through. "Drink," he invited. My stomach did a back flip.

"One glass will cure you of anything. Anything, I say. The breath of life is in this water. It cures leprosy, plague, cancer, snake bite . . ."
"I've heard that one before."

He gulped the water down and scooped up more. We were just beside the central burning ghat. I got out and climbed sewer coated steps. A woman came down leading a small procession of moaning mourners. A rich woman. With a lordly wave she summoned the barge lying in the stream and bought $15 worth of wood. The body of her husband was taken from the long bamboo litter and the rags unrolled from the feet. The

carriers dipped the feet in the muddy Ganges and the woman washed them. Then they built the fire and put the body on top.

There were two slabs of concrete near the body. I sat on one, the widow on the other. The mourners withdrew and the torch bearers brought strands of elephant grass from the eternal fire tended by the Brahmin in the centre. They put this under the pile of dry wood and the flame roared up greedily. All around us were other brown cadavers. Half of them had less than enough wood to make a full cremation, but when it was all gone the fire handlers poured water over the black bones and before they'd have a chance to toss them into the river fish hawks like small eagles would swoop down and carry away the burned flesh.

Once a dog came hurrying in for his rations, nosed about in the ash, picked up a blackened slice and was just starting away with it when an eagle pounced and flew aloft triumphantly.

As I sat on the concrete getting hotter and weaker the flames ate up through the wood and suddenly the body sat bolt upright, the greasy lop-sided mouth fell open. It sat up on the funeral pyre so strongly and surely that sticks on top were pushed aside. Nobody seemed surprised except me. I was so fascinated I forgot to be shocked. The woman was moaning a prayer and counting her beads. I watched this body in the flame as it slowly sagged down again and ceased to bear any

relationship to a human form. The heat had acted on the muscles in such a way as to cause the body to sit up. Quite a usual thing, they tell me. Heat affects the dead muscles that way.

Another funeral came down. Then two more. The wood merchants were doing boom-time business. But they lost out on one fellow. He was brought down in a square crimson package. The Brahmin attendant looked at the grim bundle, pulled the silken caste cord about his waist, said a prayer or two and they dumped the bundle into the stream. It plunged out of sight, reappeared again and bobbed away to disappear among the bathers. Leprosy. They never burn lepers. Just dump them in.

For every baby born in Benares 20 adults die. In any other land but India this would be a record.

Among 200,000 citizens 36,000 are Brahmin or Buddhist priests who spend two hours a day in pious prayer and fourteen hours in greedy grabs for the coins of demented pilgrims from outer India. There are 4,200 recognized beggars and countless ash-smeared yogis who dance on smashed glass, sit on beds of nails, rip their flesh with cactus, drink acids, eat razor blades and generally behave like the maniacs they are. This ought to be some kind of a record too.

What actually does take the sport model can opener is the fact that every disease known to medical science leaves its victims dead and dying

on the streets and river banks of Benares, that the corpses of these victims are thrown into the water people drink and that sanitation is a vague thing you read about in dictionaries; yet no epidemic of any kind has ever swept this holy city! Epidemic has swept every other great city; but never this one.

If numbers count Benares is the holiest city on earth. Holier than Jerusalem and Mecca and Lashka combined. So now, at five o'clock in the morning, let you and I go out and see what makes a place holy.

Don't wear your shorts. You might get scratched. Then leprosy and the itch and blood poison are ready to pounce. Put gloves on too and chew gum. The gum will catch some of the floating ash from human corpses which drifts through the air. You'll breathe some of it of course, but don't worry. If you die here you go straight to heaven. Everybody is a bit vague on what a Hindu heaven is, but you go there anyhow.

With the parrots and monkeys just beginning to screech and chatter in the tamarind trees we jingled away in a cart about the size and comfort of a wheelbarrow. We bumped over hole-pitted roads for three miles. The Bengali, who whipped the last ounce of life from his bony horse, bellowed and bayed at the stream of moaning pilgrims who headed from open fields to the filthy steps leading down into Mother Ganges.

The Hindu is a sad forlorn fellow—and no wonder. Here he is by the tens of thousands doing the thing he has prayed for, saved for, worked for, year after year. Sometimes his family have prayed for generations that a member might come to Benares and drink the sacred waters. With his wish about to be realized he patters barefoot through the dust moaning and whimpering. These half-naked pilgrims neither laughed nor hurried. Just a grim, solemn parade of death.

The roads got bumpier and bumpier. Shopkeepers sleepily came out of their dens to take down the shutters. Native Benares uses the streets for those things you and I only do behind closed doors, but you get used to that and don't look. The madmen start their daily torture. Here's one standing on his head, another faces the rising sun. His eyes have been burned from their sockets by tropic rays long ago. Here we pass a stand with priests in orange robes selling milk. The faithful buy this holy product of the cow and pour it into the Ganges. They call it giving mother a drink.

At last we come to the bank 75 feet above the river. Emaciated figures are there on litters waiting to be carried to the water. Men and women are dying in the fields. When the last flicker of life seems upon them they are hurried down and draped into the water. The idea is to die with the feet being washed by the mother of rivers.

Since the Ganges is cold the shock on fevered bodies often kills them.

Funerals twist their way through the mob: the bathers go straight on, the bodies swing off to the left and down past the Nepal temple, which is probably the height of indecency for this or any other world. Outside on its walls are carved exaggerated scenes of sexual debauchery and carnal behavior.

As I stepped out of my lumbering cart a score of Brahmins gathered around to guide me. Deceitful grasping fellows with leering lips and cunning eyes. Two naked men with legs swelled up beyond recognition shove out the red stump of a hand silently. They insist on touching me. I'm the only white man for miles. They just crowd in but don't speak a word. The pagan panorama of frenzied idol worshippers spreads out in a moving gray crescent.

I crowd through the moaning mob past the crimson statue of a baboon. One of the gods. Here's another temple devoted to "Mother Smallpox" with pocked women laying gifts in the hand. They are grateful about something or other. Here's a statue of a huge man committing an act that's criminal in every country on the earth except India. Here in the sand are moulded concrete statues of human sex organs; male and female. People crowd around worshipping silently.

The sadhus and yogis all have their favorite tricks to attract attention. This one barks like

a dog, another growls, a third keeps swallowing whatever people hand him and bringing it up again. I gave him a box of matches. He gulped it down, followed it by rags, a piece of green glass, a stick of wood, a cardboard box and a lump of soap. Then he belched noisily and up came the matches. Just his idea of a good time. One of his other tricks is to put a rubber suction pipe on his eyes, pull them out of his head and hang weights on them. He swings the weights from side to side like a pendulum and when these are removed the eyes slowly ooze back into blood-rimmed sockets.

On a shelf cut in the wall a nude man lay. He has been lying there on the same shelf for nineteen years and all he eats or drinks is oil. He perspires oil, and boy oh boy how he smells.

Holy cows go up and down the steps nosing for food. Pious pilgrims give them rice, flowers, melon and other fruits. Dogs snap and snarl at your legs. Monkeys go chattering and screaming all over the place and past it all in solemn grandeur twists the best known river in the world. It's deep gray-green here. On one side thousands of temples and rest homes owned by thousands of rich men. On the other a gray stretch of deserted sand as far as the eye can see.

"You built only on one side?" I asked the begging Brahmin who dogged my steps. "Of course; it is in the writings. The man who dies on the right bank of the Ganges comes back to

life as a donkey. An ass. He who dies on the left bank returns to this world in a higher caste than when he leaves it."

"But you're a Brahmin; you can't go any higher. What happens when you die?" "I am granted the privilege of fewer deaths," he wheezed.

"Fewer deaths—I don't understand." "You wouldn't," he said truculently. "Well, don't get high hat. Tell me. Holy man or no holy man, if you're a guide you'd better do some guiding."

He unfolded a long wearisome tale about people dying every seven years or something and then being burned up and coming back again. It was all over my head so I gave up.

We rolled down the steps among the bleating bathers. There were orderly rows of palm leaf parasols. Under each parasol, lordly and arrogant, sat a priest. As each bather came down he dropped a clean loin cloth beside the priest, cupped his hands before him as though holding a hymn book, closed his eyes, chanted a prayer and walked solemnly into the water.

Seven times the bather ducked up and down then, with sewage and human bodies and every other bit of filth imaginable floating all about him, he'd drink great gulps of the water, come out, take off his clothes, tip the priest who seemed to act as hat check boy, climb into his clean toggery and walk away purified forever.

For two days I prowled the upper banks and bazaars of the holy city. I found a post-office

where they don't sell stamps, the pool of life, statues of men and women in the act of fornication, temples devoted to monkey worship, temples devoted to rat worship, men who swear they can make the dead live again, empty houses row on row waiting for some member of their owner's family to get mortally sick before being occupied. Then I climbed a tourist barge and splashed out into the river.

I had been drifting up and down on a creaky wooden barge for hours. Just drifting in shocked fascination past demented, diseased, deluded and devout pilgrims in the ghastliest city the world has ever known. It was my third day in Benares, but I had not seen another white person during the whole stay.

The usual way to see the pagan panorama is to charter a barge at some cut-throat price, hire a squad of galley slaves and do a Cleopatra by having them row you from the Ghat of the Bleeding Horses to the Pool of the Sacred Rat. I started out this way, kicked in enough cash to buy the barge and then found myself surrounded by wailing souvenir hounds keen to sell me everything from vials of Ganges water to gruesome photographs of sutee, the now extinct practice of burning widows alive, and enlarged pictures of the sex atrocities on the walls of the Nepalese temple.

Teeth, bits of bone, hanks of hair, pigeon blood rubies taken from the noses of high-caste ladies and other gadgets were offered by the salesmen

who climbed aboard my raft and prevented me from seeing the show. As we neared the central burning ghat with its heap of bodies a barge load of wood drifted downstream, so I abandoned my raft and climbed the pile. The skipper was a piratical-looking old rogue with an eye to business. He got me a chair, drove all the souvenir hounds away, supplied pistachio nuts and named a cash figure for passage which I paid.

Then I sat in at the inevitable haggling argument every mourner goes through before he gets enough wood to burn his beloved. It takes at least $5 for enough wood to burn a body completely. The average Indian, either Hindu or Mohammedan, never in all his life owns $5. Few of them can raise $5 if they take in the entire family down to the second cousins of the fourth wife.

When someone dies they have to plead with the bania or money-lender for a loan, and he, after securing them hand and foot, gives them the money at some idiotic figure like 33 per cent. interest, payable down to the fourth generation.

Here they were now surrounding the wood barge. Dozens of soul-tortured mourners. Usually the body of some departed relative just lay there in the sun while they haggled and argued and threatened. The old skipper was a bloodthirsty brute who squeezed his victims to the last anna. By some racket with the guardians of the ghats he has full wood-selling privileges on certain days, and unless

families bring their own—as many do—they have to buy from him or throw the corpse to the turtles.

It was pathetic. A shrunken old man with shoulders the width of a magazine dropped the body of his only son in the dust and whined for help. He had only $4, but pleaded for a full bundle of faggots. No luck. The skipper just sat there nonchalantly cracking pistachio nuts. The heat was awful. Not only was the natural temperature above 100, but the huge fires of burning bodies made me perspire like a tap. The scrawny old boy whimpered like a frightened pup.

"My only child," he moaned. "A son I have and he is dead. An hour ago he lived. I am alone." He finally went away and sat with his grief on the dusty steps leading down from a poor-house to the edge of the water. Dozens of poor-houses filled with penniless people who have come to die line the Ganges, and they shoulder out the bodies day and night.

The cold-blooded bos'n of the barge, wise to the ways of his kind, jerked a meaty thumb in the direction of the old man and said to me: "His turban is filled with gold. He will pay. He is a rich man."

The body meantime lay partly in the water. It was wrapped in white, over which crimson dye had been squirted from a bicycle pump. The carriers of death, who had brought it down the hill, went into a near-by hut, came out with a brass

bowl and scooped up Ganges water from beside the corpse, drinking it down greedily.

After about half an hour the whimpering old man made another plea for faggots but got turned down, so, as the bos'n predicted, he unrolled his turban, took out enough to pay, and set his son ablaze among the 40 or 50 others burning there.

All sense of sympathy, shock or even surprise had gone from me. There were gruesome things happening that wouldn't do to print. Varying customs of varying castes in respect to their dead. I watched them all, bewildered but not in the least upset. Nobody seemed sorry. It was swell. There were celebrations. So-and-so had died in Benares. He was sure a lucky guy. Rows of families squatted around watching brothers, sisters, mothers burn on the pyres. The scene was animated, lively, amazing. Women would get long rakes and stir up the fire of their husbands to make it burn quicker. Everything was matter-of-fact as if you were burning autumn leaves, and nobody showed the slightest emotion.

Soon our load of wood was all gone. I was perishing from the heat. My clothes clung to me like leeches, so I dragged off shirt and trousers as we headed upstream.

The breeze running down was cooling, and with thousands and thousands swimming around I argued with myself why not jump in? No religious taboo entered my head. I thought anybody

was entitled to dive in and swim. The only reason I hadn't before was the thick stream pouring out of big sewers and the frequent bodies of plague or leprosy victims being unceremoniously dumped in. But we were above the burning ghats now, above all but one sewer. I held my nose and jumped, feet first.

Talk about bedlam breaking with a bang! I never heard anything like it. People simply shrieked. I might have been carrying away their sacred goddess or spitting on the holy rat. Pell-mell, helter-skelter, they rushed dripping from the water. As though I was a tiger shark they rushed away from me. Even the sadhus and yogis forgot their smelly meditation and stood up screaming.

Those who had been nearest to me sped for the priests to see what should be done for salvation. The bland old bos'n stopped cracking pistachios long enough to demand that I get my clothes off his tub and drown myself or swim to the other side.

On shore there was absolute pandemonium. It took me a vague minute or two to figure out what awful thing I had done and what to do about it now. The sharp nose of the police boat solved all that. It sped out silently. The river by this time was empty. The boat came alongside, the sergeant in a frenzy ordered that I swim to the deserted right bank.

"You fool," the man hissed. "If you step ashore on the ghats they'll tear you to pieces.

Every man in all this river is polluted now. See them scream." He didn't need to tell me all that. I could hear them. The women were making the weirdest row of all.

"You get my clothes, then," I said to the sergeant. "I wouldn't touch them," he hissed. "You come to the holy river and try to foul it."

"Never mind that; get my clothes."

He wouldn't do it. The barge man wouldn't toss them in or let me climb up on his boat, but as we gradually drifted down beside the burning pyres again, they handed them out to me on a long pole and I started to swim one hand to the right bank. There were enormous turtles in the stream, and once I came to a small crimson bundle I knew to be a dead baby, but there wasn't any trouble reaching the accursed right bank. I sat there and laughed. Som fon, eh, keeds? But the immediate problem was what about getting back? Both swimming and boating were ruled out. The only bridge was miles away. I squeezed my shirt and started hoofing for that bridge.

I had to chuckle to myself at the thought of walking back from a Ganges boat ride. Perhaps you think walking back from a boat ride is just a pleasant way to spend an afternoon but that only proves you haven't done much walking in India and haven't smelled Benares.

I squatted in the sands after a bit and for want of something better to do built sand castles. The heat was too much for even this childish effort so

I decided to loaf until sundown and then circle back into town by the big railway bridge.

About 100 yards back from the river was shaded damp jungle so I dragged on my shoes and went back there out of the sun. The jungle was alive with holy hoboes in pup tents and shacks made from gasoline tins. Pilgrims from thousands of miles away were camped among the tattered banana trees on the way to or from their salvation plunge in the mother of rivers. Since none of them knew of my private atrocity they were friendly enough but vaguely surprised. About half stood up uneasily as I came near.

Some of the pilgrims had horses so I started a dicker for a horse to carry me the six miles down to the bridge and back again on the city side.

"Twenty rupees," a bearded Muslin decreed. "I just want to rent him—not buy him."

"Twenty rupees." "I'll give you one rupee." "No, twenty right price."

"What's your name anyhow—Captain Kidd or Scarface?" "Twenty rupees for horse; name Attaboy."

"Name what?" "Attaboy."

"You wouldn't start kidding a stranger, would you? You did say Attaboy?" "Yes, sahib, name Mustafa Dad Attaboy." "Mustafa?—then you're a Mohammedan?" "Yes, sahib."

"Well, what are you doing in this Hindu holy of holies?" "I go chikar (hunt) at Moghul Sarai. Shoot crocodile, tiger, leopard, elephant."

"You read the Koran?" "Yes, sahib, my sire has a crimson beard" (a man with his beard dyed crimson has made the pilgrimage to Mecca).

"Fine," I said. "You know what is written is written. Allah Akbar—there is but one God . . ."

"Ah, you are follower of the prophet," he beamed. "No, no; but the book. What is written is written. It is written in that book that I use your horse for one rupee."

Dad Attaboy, of all names, grinned. "What's more," I promised him, "if you want to ride along I'll pay a rupee for the other horse, too." He grabbed this chance with alacrity and we trotted down the sands.

As the bridge grew closer I found myself gypped after all, because it was a railway span with troops guarding each end. No horse could get across even if they'd let us and I could see a little bribing necessary to get over at all.

Some tugs loaded with pilgrims were coming upstream and about 50 women in red loincloths were standing knee deep pounding clothes on flat slabs of rock to wash them. Sewage and bits of floating body didn't worry these washwomen. They just swished and pounded with the general aim of knocking holes in somebody's shirt.

I got off the horse under the shadow of the red bridge and gave the suspicious owner two rupees. He bit each one solemnly, knocked them on stones

to see if they'd ring properly and then announced, to his apparent surprise, that they were good.

I climbed over three rows of barbed wire and heard the sentries sing out a challenge from above but kept climbing.

Two tough-looking Khassadars stopped me. I flipped open a wallet showing my reporter's press badge and marched on like the Nawab of Noof Doof himself. If there is any one word these people understand and read and respect, it's police. Well, lucky for me a reporter's pass says police in bold black type and over here it's far more helpful than a dozen of Aladdin's lamps.

Halfway across I stopped to watch the Ganges twist its muddy way toward the Bay of Bengal, half expecting to see the bodies of a few victims float down. But there were none.

At the Benares side of the bridge I hopped into a tom-tom cart and had my liver massaged all the bumpy way up to the ghats again. I was keen to see if the baying Brahmins had recognized me and what they were going to do about it.

They didn't do anything. The place was its usual bustling colorful panorama of pious pilgrims scooping up great jars of water to carry thousands of miles in the hope of curing some ailing cow or man in Ceylon or Bengal or the lands of Golconda.

The forehead artists were having a busy time drawing caste marks on noses, cheeks and brows. Two-finger men and three-finger men. They sat on steps ladling out paste made from color, cow

manure, milk and Ganges water. Horrible things happen if a two-finger caste man happens to draw a mark on the brow of a three-finger man. Simply means that he'll come back to earth as a caged canary bird or a flea in a polar bear's ear or something silly like that. Chap has to be careful of his fingers.

Near the Ghat of the Bleeding Horses 50 or 60 meaty disciples of Siva, the sex god, sat chanting prayers and fingering silk strings. The steps here are the steps of death. It is ordained by omnipotent Brahmins that any man who goes up or down and misses a step shall lose his wife to another lover, or his life, within a year. I hopped up two at a time.

A few of the meaty men of destiny forgot to concentrate on their verses when I did my hippity hop. They had to start all over again and furiously smeared paint on their foreheads to save themselves from the contamination of my shadow.

I strolled over to a temple about the size of a hope chest and watched idol worshippers cut the heads off goats. Women were grovelling in the blood and lapping it up with their tongues. As I watched the rumble of drums sounded up top so I went up and saw a Madrasi maiden sold at a bridal auction for 550 rupees. It was really a wedding. but looked like an old time slave market.

Trying to figure out a jig saw puzzle with half the parts missing is a cinch compared to the job of sizing up the heart throbs of a Hindu.

In a land with 9,000,000 widows eternally forbidden to remarry, with rich men and rajahs sporting anywhere from 10 to 80 wives each, with thousands of beautiful girls set aside to be temple dancers or courtesans and with more than eight men to every seven women in the general population there is only one universal plea. We want women; we want wives.

India has no old maids; but it has bachelors. With rajahs and nawabs and other high hooper doopers scrambling for the good lookers it's pretty tough going for the average man to get himself a fraulein. Once he does get her she's locked up like the family jewels and if you or I or Uncle Ben come around peeking, we'd better pick out a nice clean burning ghat before somebody slits our throats.

All sorts of tricks are used to get around the problem of no spare women. First prize goes to the Ladakhs of the north where a girl who marries a man automatically becomes the bride of all his brothers. In the one family of Ladakhs I met there were seven sons, and so far as I could figure out they got along reasonably well with one girl among them. They had a little difficulty figuring out baby's correct parentage but that's all taken care of by clan law.

Here in Benares and all through central and southern India, they have a couple of new stunts. Tricky stunts. Let's watch this wedding of the Madrasi maid and see what it's all about.

The inevitable drums and cymbals clash and bang as we go up the steep steps of the ghats to join the parade. Madrasis are strong on orange as a celebration shade and this bride is painted orange on legs and neck. A low tent shaped like the shelter of a Sahara Bedouin is guarded by a droopy chested man of 40 or so. He's the bridegroom.

It probably took him forty years to save enough money to buy this full-bodied lass and now he stands at the door with an ivory handled knife trying to look imposing and determined and vigorous like a bridegroom should look. The drums clash as the priests come up the steps with a silver bowl of water in their hands. Out steps the bride. Good looking this. Black, not tawny brown like most Hindu girls. She wears an orange cloth around her loins, another around her shoulders. Golden bangles jingle on her ankles and rubies hang from her ears and nose.

The spectators clap and chant and gobble balls of boiled rice. Boys distribute candied pineapple and slices of mango, making sure the holy bulls who loiter perilously on the steps get as much as the wedding guests. There is a weak-looking wine to drink.

The priest goes through some rigmarole and finishes up with the odd vow to the effect that if this woman proves unfaithful, unsatisfactory, unhealthy or un-anything else, she can be divorced. " But Sha Narayan Baroo shall have possession of

any child she may later bear unless the wedding dower is repaid."

The whoopee and hullabaloo continued far into the night, but when the priest slipped away I followed him to get the dope on this dowry game.

"What did this woman cost?" I asked. "The price of the wedding feast and 550 rupees."

"And what's this about repaying the money?" "The husband gets it back if he is not satisfied," the priest said as his false teeth wiggled.

"In what length of time?" "Any length. It is not decided by him. He can get divorce if his woman bears him no children, if she is unfaithful to him."

"And then he gets the money back?" "Of course." "Well, who has the money now?" "The girl's father. It has been a great day for him."

"Sure, but suppose he spends this money. Then his daughter is divorced—what happens to this bridegroom who pays his money and gets nothing?"

"It is very simple," the priest said, getting a little bored. "If the father cannot give the money back this man, Sha Baroo, has full rights in all children born to this woman whether she marries again once or twice or six times. All children, no matter who the father, belong to this man."

"So that the real fathers don't count at all?" "They might—if they raise the money they can pay off the debt. But such cases are rare. Most

of our girls love their husbands as lord and master and live in happiness throughout life."

"I know, but suppose this maid of Madras doesn't like this old chap; he's older than her father. If she runs away with a young fellow who has money to repay the dower, does the husband have to take the money?"

"No, my friend, it goes to the government and this man who is married to-day can still claim all children born to this woman. That is not the universal custom of India. Just this caste. The criminal caste—and now I go."

His big flat feet padded away down the steps and I sat there trying to dope things out. It was no good; my head was on the swim. Then I realized I hadn't eaten for ten hours, and hadn't seen a white person in four days so I walked through the stinking street of the lepers hunting a tonga or tum tum cart and came to a high wooden wall with a revolving window in each side. It was just like the revolving doors used in stores at home during cold weather. There was a sign there in English, Urdu and Hindustani: "Unwanted babies may be left here. Pull cord. Leave name and age."

Unwanted babies? I remembered seeing the same sort of arrangement in Spain. You leave the babies and the Church rears them. This place looked like a church too. But Hindus are supposed to gain a better place in heaven if they have many sons and certainly a richer place on this earth if

they have daughters; then why give the babies away? I sat waiting an hour. A frail yellowish woman with a baby straddled across her thin hip came up, looked at me and walked past. She hesitated a long time and came back.

The baby was the puniest little thing I ever saw. She looked it over carefully, fastened a dark red string with a note around the waist, pulled the bell, shoved the revolving gate and saw the child disappear inside.

I couldn't dope it all out. One chap gets it in the marriage vow that he owns the kiddies whether he fathers them or not, another has so little interest she drops the baby into an orphanage.

"See trick?" a man bellowed. I stopped puzzling long enough to look up.

A hairy chested man with a shape like a grand piano was picking up a young bull by the feet. A bull, no less. "Do tricks," he grinned. That's India folks. Something different all the time. If it isn't babies it's bulls or beggars or books. The first 100 years are going to be the hardest, I can see that.

By the following day, my sixth in Benares, dumb dazed debauchery was beginning to addle my insides. My servant, not being Hindu, loathed the place even more than I did.

The smell of corpses, throb of drums, whimper of dying pilgrims and sour heavy food began to sicken my nostrils and when that happens there's only one remedy. Get out and stay out.

It was moontime in the bazaar of the brass beaters. Steaming hot and noisy as a foundry. Men sat cross-legged pounding out plates and trays and perfume jars. Girls were baking enamel into the holes. Their perspiring bodies shone like burnished copper, but they didn't have time to look up. They just kept painting and sweating at 14 cents a day.

I drifted off toward a quieter settlement. Monkeys scampered out of my way and stood chattering. I hate monkeys. I used to like them. I hate them now. There was a slimy green pool behind a broken wall. Nobody was looking, so I heaved a rock at one of the monks and knocked him screaming into the water. He put up a holler like a stuck pig and a boy on crutches went to help him out.

I had some letters to mail, and climbed up a creaky bamboo place to get stamps. There was a row of tellers' cages with men sitting up on the high desks. One of them who looked exactly like an orang-outang in a cage said they didn't sell stamps. "Buy them from the man outside."

"Isn't this a post-office?" "Yes."

"Well, do you mean to say they don't sell stamps in the post-office?" "Certainly," he said.

That seemed to catch me bending. There was no answer, so I went down and bought from the toothless old crone who sat with his scanty store of stamps in the dust.

The inevitable wailing funeral went past, the

corpse slung on a single bamboo pole between two coolies who trotted in the dust. I sat on a rock in the shade, but a holy bull came along and breathed down my neck, and that was enough of that.

Just idly drifting around I came to a deserted street. Not a person moved there. The houses all seemed empty. A voice came from nowhere: "If I only had a few ounces of strychnine. Would I kill these pesky monks! Would I?"

Those were my sentiments right down to the ground, so I hunted up and down for the speaker. I couldn't find him till a rip of profanity came out of a house like machine-gun fire. I peeked in. A Scotsman looked up in surprise, said "Cheerio" and went on cursing monkeys.

"What's wrong?" I asked. "Wrong? come and see. Them there meters, that's what's wrong. Monkeys have pulled ten meters right off the walls, they have. Blew out the main fuse and mighty near set the town afire."

"Too bad they didn't."

The Scot laughed. "Ye're right," he said, lighting a pipe. There was a bed there made of rope with a red sheet over it. I sat down and smoked.

"Nobody seems to live here," I said. "No, these are dying houses."

"Dying houses?" "Sure, lad. You know about Benares. Anybody who dies here goes straight to the Hindu paradise—whatever that is. Well, rich people from all India keep these houses.

Thousands of such houses. When the family gets sick they come up here to pass out. They die on that bed you're sitting on. Hemorrhage, that last chap. The family just went back to Baroda. They left a window open and in came the monkeys ripping things up. This place is only fit for devils and monkeys. No self-respecting man would stay here."

"Well, you're here." "Aye—for three more weeks and then the likes of this town will never see me again if I have to drown myself."

I began to feel the same way about Benares, filth and death and crawly things. I wanted to see clean kids play ring-around-a-rosie. I wanted, worst of all, to see my own kids, to hear them laugh and ask me to tell them the story of the three bears or Jack and Jill.

Laughter! People do laugh, don't they? I used to laugh. But nobody in this holy hovel of Hindu hokum laughs unless they cackle like maniacs. Only death here, yapping monkeys, cows on the front porch and crazy people drinking sewer water or praying to a concrete lad with an elephant's head.

I squinched my cigarette and got up from the crimson death bed. "You're right about this place, Scotty. I'm going to weigh anchor and scram. I'll never be back, not even for a full head of hair or a foolproof system to beat the bank at Monte Carlo. Me for a nice clean abattoir or a garbage dump."

The Scot grinned, unfastened another smashed meter, cursed some more baboons. I twisted through the empty streets to the tower of a Baptist mission and found a pre-war Chevrolet. The machine bubbled and steamed in the choking heat as we bumped over the mud road.

My Gurkha was asleep under a banyan, surrounded by hopeful snake charmers who dragged out ropes of python for my entertainment. "Pack up," I said. "We're going." "Master said go to-morrow. I bring snake man. Make python fight cobra."

"He can fight a three-headed tiger for all I care. Pack up."

"But I bring snake man. We wait long time." "Pack up and shut up." He eventually drove the charmers away and reloaded the spare shirt and typewriter.

The station was ascream with pilgrims, beggars, priests, goats, cows and rabid dogs in that order. Every pilgrim had from one to 50 pot-bellied jars of Ganges water to hoard at home for some vital case of future emergency. I was the only white man, so the sellers of candied popcorn, snakeskin belts, tiger purses, brass cuspidors, pistachio nuts, hot dogs and other junk bore down on me with predatory yelps. "Hot dogs," a boy howled hopefully. Can you imagine the contents of a Benares hot dog? Suffering octopus! The red train came in and was shunted into three long sections, each for different centres. There was no need for

me to join the wild scramble for a seat, because I was the only first-class passenger and had a car to myself.

The trains stood ready to race away while straggling pilgrims, more dead than alive, found their stuffy places. Beggars swarmed my window, but I gave them the icy eye. One little girl was clear eyed and graceful as an antelope. She was about eight and led a blind man about on a leather dog leash. She just did the leading. He whined the piece somebody had taught him to say to white men. A silly thing: "Me got no mammy, got no pappy, got no job, got no eyes. Sahib give me baksheesh."

He whined this over and over again. The girl just stood silently. I was admiring the ruby hanging from her nose when she got shy, picked her crimson shirt up to cover her face and unloosed one of the most winsome smiles I have ever seen. The genuine article. I kicked in with a coin and the smile broadened. We had quite a flirtation there. Me and a black girl of eight with a ring in her nose.

The train clattered away at last and she waved me farewell, I shuddered to think of her future. She'll be married at 14, a mother at 15 and an old woman at 30 if she lives that long.

And now, if you're an ordinary reader, you've been about seven minutes reading this last 1,000 words. In that time somebody in India was killed by a snake. Every seven minutes, night and day,

rain or shine, summer or winter, someone is killed by a snake in India. In those same seven minutes four people have died from cholera and three from plague. Just a nice bedtime story. Sleep tight.

MAN EATING VULTURES

THE ramble across the jungle from Benares to Bombay was a cross between a giggling Sunday school picnic and a Hallowe'en party because we hitched on to a brace of special tourist cars and listened to tales of horror and madcap adventure for two days and a night. The personally conducted girls and boys seemed feverish with the idea of telling a taller tale than their neighbor and the train buzzed with romance.

"Of course you've seen the Towers of Silence?" several people whispered to me in shocked tones.

"No; what and where are the Towers of Silence?"

"Burial places in Bombay. Corpses are fed to vultures there. The vultures eat them up. You must see the place."

I agreed, and did see it. I rolled up Malabar Hill to the famed tower late on the afternoon of arrival. At noon that day a Parsee business man started on a train journey to Poona, collapsed on the way. When I reached the towers his white bones lay bleaching in the Asiatic sun. He was dead and gone forever. Not a hair or a scrap of flesh remained. They had fed this heart victim

to the vultures an hour before my arrival and when I got up to the hill of death they were stripping the clothes off three other bodies.

The vultures swoop down with foghorn cries. They fight and tear and rip flesh, entrails, eyeballs. They feast in ghoulish glee and then sit soberly on the edge of the white stone wall waiting the arrival of new bodies.

Here comes a funeral. Let's watch it. Four bearded priests in pure white robes are leading the way. They come two by two holding a handkerchief between them. "Naked we come into the world; naked we shall leave it. Dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return again." The priests are chanting this over and over. We can't make out the words because they are Hindustani.

Behind the priests as they pass up this flower-covered hill are the keepers of the corpses. They carry a dead woman on a steel tray. She is wrapped in white. Behind her are the relatives, two by two. Some of these are in brilliant indigo or scarlet or mustard yellow, but most of them are in white.

Take my hand now and we'll join the procession. No single people allowed here. You must take somebody's hand and hold it tight. We wind up the hill. The vultures look on indifferently. They feast on human bodies every day of the year. Not really hungry to-day. They have eaten eight already. We climb up higher. Living Bombay gleams white and clean below us. A round white

building with a black steel door is ahead. Nearly 300 vultures roost silently on the wall.

There is a steep incline leading up to the black gate. The priests stand aside. The corpse bearers, swathed in white like gaunt ghosts, set down the body and unwrap it. The relatives take the last look. We all fall back now. The vultures get impatient.

The door opens. There are 200 raised slabs of stone like hospital cots. They run in circles like seats in a bull ring. Outer tier for males, middle tier for females, inside for children. Skulls and ribs and arm bones are lying about in the white sun. All the priests and relatives are gone now. Only one stays. He stays so that I can steal a peek, because everything has to be done in twos, according to the Parsees.

The bearers wrap their faces in cheese cloth, pick up their gruesome load and put it on a slab face down. There is a swish like the sound of a hurricane through palms as 200 or more vultures fly down to scratch and claw the remains. Fiends of fury, these. Huge digging talons. Beaks like swords. In twenty minutes not a trace of flesh remains, but we've had enough. Nobody is allowed inside for a look. We have just caught this picture of destruction through a partly opened steel door. Horrible, but quick and painless.

The relatives are back at the perpetual fire now worshipping one of the three gods of the Parsees

—fire, water and earth. The fire house is pure white. Wind sighs through the palms and sycamore trees. Vultures wheel silently overhead. It's all very peaceful in this, the weirdest burial ground in the world.

A priest comes out of the fire room to mop his perspiring brow and we get chatting. A fat roly-poly old boy this, with a twinkle in his eye. Some day the vultures will tear him to shreds, but he doesn't care.

"Why not?" he smiled. "Would you put me in the ground to spoil the good earth? No, my son. Your people wouldn't understand. Your people are eaten by worms in damp soggy ground."

"You think this awful, hideous, impossible. It is the cleanest funeral in all the world. A man dies. Within a few hours his body is washed and carried here. Always carried. The birds of the air devour it completely. Within a week the bones are swept into a pit. Rain and sun and water soon make them dust. The dust drips through charcoal filters and wells to the four reservoirs attached to each tower. There is nothing left. No disease, contamination. Nothing but pure water. It is purer than air."

"They will feed you to the vultures?" I asked. "Of course. I pray that it shall be so. Were I to die in your distant land no birds could eat me. They put me far underground and my soul would be in torment forever."

We stood there with the smell of burning sandalwood pleasant in our nostrils. A buzz came up from Bombay far below, but here it was quiet and cool. A man with his shirt-tail dangling came up with a message.

"Come, if you would learn the way of the Parsees," the priest said. We clattered down steep steps to a low white bungalow. "Poor hospital," he said. We went into a four-bed room smelling of chloroform. There was a screen around one bed. A man lay dying there. His eyes were wide open. He seemed horribly frightened.

A bony orderly brought a brass dish and the priest squirted some pasty-looking stuff in it. They wheeled the sick man away and opened his mouth. A few drops of the pasty dope were put inside. He recited a long rambling prayer in a halting voice. His eyes stared ahead and he fingered his beads.

One of the vulture feeders came in, then the other. They had a big brass dish of water. They sat there waiting for the man to die. He closed his staring eyes soon and they started to wash him, but he wasn't dead yet. He gave a horrible look of defeat and lapsed back on his hard pillow.

I'd had enough. I got back into the open air and chewed a fat wad of gum just for something to do. There was a bit of hocus pocus inside the room and a man went away for fire. He brought

back some burning sticks from the great central blaze and let them smoke up the room. Then they brought out the brown body of the man who stared, faced it naked toward the sun, and silently carried it up hill as one more tid-bit to the best fed vultures this world has ever seen.

* * * *

The fever belted jungle lands of Borneo, Congo, Brazil, Tanganyika or any other white man's grave of a tropical world is a pleasant playground for pretty Pollyannas compared to the snake farm of Bombay. Here death summons his coiled battalions every morning before breakfast. I walked through the tree-tangled jungle lands with a doctor the day after visiting the towers, while natives with hands like greased lightning seized the most furious snakes ever seen by man, nonchalantly drained their poison into tiny vials and carelessly tossed them away. They might have been ropes of new-made sausage for all these pouncing Parsees cared; but they were snakes; the king cobra, the black cobra, the Russell viper, boa, whip snake, copperhead, horned viper and other killers.

Every morning of the year snakes are caught here, drained and used for the distilling of antidotes which, if used in time, will save a life. The antidotes are shipped all over. They have saved men from the bite of serpents in reptile houses and zoos throughout the world. You'd expect ordinarily, that snake-breeding and poison-collecting would

be done in cages or under some form of fool-proof protection where death doesn't snoop about ready to throttle you at a moment's notice. But of all the carefree indifference I ever saw anywhere these charmers sure take the inlaid ash can.

The French doctor was a bit bored by my request to stroll the synthetic jungle lands with him. "No," he said abruptly.

"I'm not a tourist." "No," he repeated.

"I won't take the camera." "No," he said and that seemed that.

I stuck my cork sun hat on the back of my head, fished for a cigarette and asked if I could at least see the laboratory. "No," he said. "Okay, umpchay," I said.

"Okay what?" "Umpchay."

"What's that mean?" "I give up." I grinned. "I don't know." I've got a pretty good grin. I use it a lot and it usually works. The doctor smoked a cigarette, strolled into a glassed-in house and came out with high boots. "Put these on and keep to the paths."

I was in.

The boots were thick and ran up above the knee. "Now, these," he said, handing me gauntlets. He had high boots himself, but wore no gauntlets.

We walked among the thick, black vegetation. Thick trees with twisty roots, climbing vines, banana trees, eucalyptus, palms, weeds of all kinds. The paths were clear and never ran under the trees.

Three turbaned lads with broad red smiles—their teeth were blood red—went cheerily ahead and then from apparently nowhere they seized snake after snake, massaged him about the neck someplace and drained deadly poison into bottles. They hardly spoke. The doctor loafed nearby with the proper bottles. The men were marvels of skill, speed and daring.

No doped, drugged or diseased serpents these. Writhing, pouncing killers. If anything had so much as touched me I would have jumped half way to the moon. I was afraid to step off the path. The doctor saw this and chuckled a slow, sly chuckle. To him it was all boring routine. To me a thrill.

Once I stood with my back to a hollow stump. I didn't know it was hollow. The pouncing Parsee said something and they both looked at me and laughed.

The charmer played his idiotic little flute. "Behind, sahib," he warned. I snapped around. There, silent and straight as a string, stood a coal black cobra. He was motionless as a statue. Never moved a hairsbreadth. His hood was puffed out to its full width; about three inches. He just watched my legs with cold, hypnotic eyes until he was grabbed so quick, squeezed so thoroughly and tossed away so fast he was glad to seek shade and shelter somewhere. So was I.

We ambled slowly through the stone-walled

grounds. From the most unexpected spots in the place snakes were being swept up, squeezed and thrown away again.

"Where is the king?" I heard the doctor ask a bit impatiently. "He will be in the baskets."

"We did not see him yesterday." "He will be here, sahib."

"King?" I asked. "Who's king?" "Don't talk," the doctor snapped.

"The king will be here," the Parsee said.

We stood waiting. I was well back wishing I had a machine gun or pet mongoose. They got out the right bottle. Then a round wicker thing about the size of a platter was moved and a yellow snake slid out. Yellow with a touch of black. He looked quite ordinary. He came toward me, looked around and then reared up in as fiendish a pose as I ever hope to see anywhere. As he stood the hood grew thinner and wider and harder. The king of the snake world. Black cobras may look worse—some are bigger—but this bead-eyed monster with the spreading hood is king of them all. He just stood ready, waiting, confident. He hesitated a moment, let the hood droop down again and was off into the damp grass. Like a snapping spring the hunter was on him and it was all over. Simple as keeping fleas off a brass baboon if you know how to do it. The doctor was still bored and nonchalant and silent. I was just a bit terrified. Me for some high leather boots when I get into the tall timbers.

"Don't you ever get bitten?" "Certainly, but not often."

"What do you do?" "Operate, use antidotes. Our business, friend. Once a day. Every day. We make fools of these serpents. Occasionally they make fools of us."

"Yes, well, thanks a lot. If I stick around they'll make a nervous wreck out of me."

On the way back to tropical civilization 20 or 30 street charmers spread their sausage-ropes of cobras and adders out in the brilliant sun for me to admire. Spooky shows, some of these. Too spooky for right now.

* * * *

A hundred thousand shrouded figures, like corpses after a disaster, lay huddled on the sidewalks of bloody Bombay. A half million others sleep 20 or 30 in a room. Vagabonds, nomads, untouchables, bums.

Their only home is the roadway, their only possession a rag around their middle or a stray penny tied in the folds of their turbans, their only hope a merciful death beside the distant Ganges.

Incredible this, and beyond belief.

During eight years of news hunting I've covered the mill run of home town disasters, explosion, fire, shipwreck, train smash, gas blast and a lot more. When the reporters get there they usually find one, two, or more silent shapes under a tarpaulin, a blanket or a sheet. The victims.

As I prowled around Bombay night after night it was easy to imagine that a vast upheaval had slain half the Hindus of Bombay and they lay here awaiting the dead wagon. It was impossible to walk the sidewalk even though it was very broad here on the boulevard.

Just silent figures sprawled all over. Here's a scrawny lad with his basket of cobras as a pillow. When dawn comes he'll bathe at a water fountain, dope his snakes a bit to make sure they're harmless and prowl the streets looking for breakfast. A girl crouches sobbing, a man scratches industriously, a withered brown hand stretches out and touches my leg. The hand is only a red stump and I jump like I've been shot. Cancer or leprosy. Here's a guy lying between two mongooses. Here's one cuddling up to a sacred bull. Here's a nut with a monkey on a rope. The monk is curled up on his chest. Here beneath a statue of the Prince of Wales are two puny little women stark naked. Road-menders, these, with wicker baskets atop their heads. Steel shutters bar the gateways to the buildings and watchmen sit outside chewing the betel nut which gives Bombay the appearance of a vast abattoir.

They spit juicy streams of this red stuff all over. Exactly like blood. It stains buildings, roads, street cars, clothes, shoes and everything else it touches. We're on Queen's Rd. now walking toward the harbor front. In most cities the harbor lands are tough as a steak. Here the elite of Bombay sip

their iced drinks with the breeze from the south seas sweeping inland.

The moon shines white and clear through the palms which flank the cricket ground but on this side is a big stone wall. You'd take this for a jail at first. High stone wall with steel barred doors and cops hanging about looking for trouble. But as we pass along they unload a couple of corpses from a gray truck like an armored car and shoulder them inside. This is another burning ghat where hundreds of Hindus go up in smoke every day.

Although I'd already seen some daylight burning I rambled in behind this animated procession of death. Nobody stopped me. I almost joined in the argument over the cost of wood because the widow was certainly getting gypped.

There was a high pile of logs there and some scales. While a man was registering the death at a filthy little smoke-filled office the woman started to haggle over the wood. She needed six logs roughly the length of her lord and master who was now a bony figure under a rope of rag. The clerk gave her a price and a weight which were cheap enough, but since women here can't read, write or count higher than four he sure handed her the razzle dazzle when it came to making calculations.

She moaned a bit about not having enough dough but finally paid and joined the unwashed mourners who had carted the corpse inside. Four

fires were burning already. The wood fellow stuck three logs between steel pipes sticking in the air and then nonchalantly piled the body on top of these. With a third log he took three lusty swings at the skull of the dead man. The crushing sound was just about too much for me. Then the widow came alongside with a sort of pancake made from cow manure. She put this gently on her husband's chest, piled three more logs on top of him, signalled that all was ready and watched the official lighter-up get the flames started. They curled upward among the logs, scorched the white shroud from the body and started the business of destruction.

Once the woman poked a log so it would burn a bit harder, then she turned her back and walked away into the night disgraced forever. Now she is outcast. Worse than an untouchable. All widows are. They become the servants of the family servants. They have to do the filthiest and meanest jobs ever given a human being to do. That's because of hubby's death. If they had been decent, devout Hindu wives their husbands would never have died, according to this childish faith, so now, since the British won't let the wives be burned on the same pyre with their husbands, they go on living a life of drudgery.

Not so the men. As soon as the burning pile got well under way the male friends of the body sat back on specially reserved benches—me among

them—telling stories. The men occasionally got up and stirred the fire and in an hour there were just a few ashes floating about in the vagrant winds. Some of the ashes settled on my shoulders. That made me feel no better fast.

By the time the fire was all gone dawn was near so I sauntered down to the customs house pump to watch the sun bring life back into the limbs of those sidewalk sleepers. They stirred and scratched and yawned and then one by one crowded around the pump to do those things usually reserved for the privacy of the bathroom. But privacy is one of those pleasures nobody bothers about east of Suez.

Where cows are sacred and humans are untouchable. Where men with Oxford degrees draw one-tenth the salary of plumber's assistants, where the temples are privately owned hovels of filth and sin and where they feed bodies to vultures every day of the week privacy is one of those things that doesn't matter too much.

And if I sound a bit hard boiled and unsympathetic over the tough times these diseased paupers face remember that self-preservation is the first law of man. The invader who gets sobby over the plight of India goes insane within one month. Already ninety per cent. of all my plans have gone blooey.

* * * *

The ancient rhymster who dashed off that ditty, "Hark, hark, the dogs do bark, the beggars are

coming to town," sure must have said his little piece in Bombay.

Boy, how they do bark! A hundred of them below my window. They yelp and hiss and fight with beggars, untouchables and occasional cats over the hotel garbage. By dawn 200 crows will take their place raucously scratching and clawing over waste stuff from India's biggest hotel. The dogs serenade me at night, the crows waken me with the sun. The snakes are an ever present entertainment.

You stroll about the streets of Bombay and boys drag these deadly monsters from flat baskets with pleas for baksheesh. With idiotic wooden horns, they pretend to make the cobras sit up and dance in rhythm, but the thing is a dismal joke if you've seen the naked fakirs of Morocco do their stuff. Wooden dope crazed snakes these. No more pep than an overweight hog. But there are 30 poisonous snakes in India and they surely give a lad the creepies.

I prowled the bullion bazaars of Bombay all day feeling alternately creepy, astonished, frightened and shocked. Such a fabulous, hideous country. No man can picture it. Write what you really see in this impossible country and at once they throw your stuff in the waste basket.

Here we stand at a busy corner, traffic cops shoot cars hither and thither. A telephone kiosk with up-to-date dials will put you in touch with London within an hour, but who's this half naked guy

lolling alongside? The kerb surgeon. He's got a leather sack around his fat paunch and in it the tools of a hospital. Couple of knives, some tweezers, bottle of iodine, dash or two of chloroform and he's ready to take out an appendix or deliver a baby right there on the sidewalk.

I sat beside one to-day while he slit a man's arm from elbow to wrist and drained off a yellow, gooey fluid; while he cleaned out four men's ears with long sharp steels like nut picks, while he drove a flat golden ring through a child bride's nose, and nonchalantly cut away a diseased toe.

For all this he collected about thirty-four cents and figured it a great day. He'll be midwife at the birth of a baby for a dime. He's sitting cross-legged right now on half the corners of Bombay with his dozen or so unsterilized tools ready for the next heroic victim. And heroic they sure are. Never a squawk or a howl of pain as this untooled carpenter hacks away at his gruesome job.

The kerb doctor and I were sprawled somewhere near the Bullion Market—Bombay's unbelievable street of solid gold, idiots, fools, holy men, sacred cows, untouchables. Parsees, Afridis, Hindus, bronzed Englishmen, tourists and a million other types passed us. Sacred cows wander here and there.

Slobbery arrogant beasts these. Everything stands aside for them. Absolutely everything. They wander in and out of buildings, crowd people

into the gutter, hold up traffic, bellow, breed and give birth right in the roadway. They lie down and sleep in the post-office or the hotel lobby. Weird and ghostly fanatics follow them. When the cows respond to nature's call, these crazed men gleefully pounce on the excrement and smear it over their faces, into their hair around their loins. Don't laugh, it's their idea of learning a Sunday school lesson.

As I sat near the ear cleaner, a cow and calf strolled sleepily by. A man came along with a pushcart full of melons. The cow thought it a swell idea to eat half the bozo's stock in trade and the calf followed mama's advice. The truck pusher was in a frenzy of delight.

The gods were favoring him. He had a stand-in. Whoopee! Hurrah for the sacred cow! Gaunt, ghostly men, smelling to high heaven, lurked about with tin cans full of ashes. The ashes came from the burning ghats where a hundred or more brown corpses are burned up every six hours, morning or night, winter or summer.

As the cow and calf finished their melons, they sauntered away amid a jingling of bells. The human ash heap followed them patiently. I brought up the rear wondering what I would see. The cows mounted the sidewalk, crowded off British soldiers, tourists, fools, priests and students alike, nibbled a potted palm tree, scraped themselves against a cigar store kangaroo and then lay down. The impossible looking yogis squatted

there with them gazing dreamily toward the sun. I slunk under a canopy and waited, too.

An hour passed. So did the weirdest and wildest collection of human souls who ever breathed. Naked beggars, yes-men, students brooding over their books, fanatics bearing the ever-present sign, "Boycott British Goods", men carrying a corpse, the Prince of Idar roaring past in his sixteen cylinder speedster, a Highland major very cocky and sure of himself. The cows got up from the sidewalk at last and did what the holy men were looking for. The men grovelled in the filth and then, their day's delight at an end, crossed their skinny legs and sat on the filthy stones till the day had gone and a white moon had come up over the hills to shine on this fiendish and unbelievable land.

"Why?" I asked. "Why do you smear yourself with the dirt of the cow?" The white-faced fevered fanatic turned sleepy, sick eyes on me, but never spoke a syllable.

"Is this for salvation? Do you pray that you shall burn beside the Ganges or that many sons will be born to you. Tell me, yogi; do you want money?"

I picked out some one anna coins. The man stared abruptly ahead, then as I went to give him the money he stood up, screamed like a terrified babe and rushed across the road to a pump, where he stripped off his loincloth, turned the tap and stood there stark naked washing out his mouth.

The water made filthy rivulets down his scrawny chest. I ducked. Enough of his bughouse behavior. Me for the beef-eating Britons every time.

BEDLAM IN THE BAZAARS

HOW would you like to get paid a dollar for every glass of water scooped up from your bathtub after your Saturday night plunge? Soft pickings, eh?

Well, some of Bombay's brown Brahmins get that. No fooling. The Brahmin is the supreme high hooper dooper of this impossible land. He owns the temples. Owns some privately. The Church has nothing to do with these. He tells you how much you must pay to satisfy the gods if you've done some of the million and one things which make the gods a bit fed up with you. He sets the price for keeping the gods happy in case you have offended them.

If you are an untouchable you dare not come within sixty-four feet of a Brahmin. Since only about six Bombay streets are sixty-four feet wide that means you are supposed to run and run fast if one of these arrogant priests comes near.

I had wondered about this funny caste business ever since arriving because nobody that I saw was bowing and scraping and prostrating themselves anywhere. The cars are full of weird, smelly people all looking and dressing differently but they are all in the same car.

I asked a dozen different people to point out a Brahmin to me on the street and most of them did. Then I followed the Brahmin around and nobody seemed to pay any more attention to him than to me. But later I climbed to the seats of the mighty. Malabar Hill where all the wealthy have two vast homes. One for themselves. One for their army of servants.

Here most of the residents are princes, maharajahs (in bankruptcy), rajahs and Sir somebody or other. Huge but flimsy looking homes behind big stone walls. There was a sort of porter's lodge at one spot and I saw men dishing out water to wild-eyed women. Some of the women drank the stuff there on the spot, some poured it over their heads or babies. Some washed themselves in it there on the roadway. They seemed frenzied as if this, at last, were the elixir of youth.

Finally a white man came by and I asked the eternal why of India. Why all this? What's going on here?

"A vallabha lives here," he said a bit impatiently. Then he hurried away as if I should know all about vallabhas. Another chap came striding up the hill with two fine dogs on a leash. "A temple man lives there—probably selling bath water."

He kept going too and I was still stranded. I tried a third and fourth. They didn't know. Some kind of a god or something lived in the house. Finally an intelligent looking Parsee came along reading a book. I tackled him. "A holy

Brahmin," he said. "One of the Hindu hereditary Potentates; I think you could get a price list."

"A price list?" "Yes. These high Brahmins make charges for the people to see them or touch them or buy their bath water. It is said to be sacred, sahib."

"Sacred? Because he baths in it?" "That's the belief."

He went with me and we asked the porter. He gave us a small printed list in Hindustani.

"Homage to the priest by sight .90; by touch $3.60. For the delight of eating the betel nut spat out by the priest $3. For a glass of his bath water $1.00. For the honor of washing the priest's foot $5.40. For the credit of swinging the priest in a hammock $7.20; for the joy of sitting near him $10.80."

"You mean to say these people pay this?" "Of course, sahib. We Parsees do not, of course."

"But who does?" "Low caste Hindus."

"But these low caste people: they only earn 20 cents a day. How can they do this thing?"

"I don't know, my friend. You see what you see. Next to bathing in the Ganges this is the most sacred thing for them."

I hurried downtown and looked up a friend in a big import house. "You got any Brahmins working here?" "Dozens; why?"

"Well, some chap tells me they sell bath water." "So they do."

"Well, what do they need to work for. Why

not take half a dozen baths a day and get rich?" "Wait a minute," this friend said. "Don't ever try to dope out this caste racket. You'll go crazy in an hour. The top dog Brahmins get away with murder just because they try it. The chaps working here have college degrees longer than your finger but their average pay is $13 a month and they don't get a dime extra. I have no degrees but these chaps take their orders from me. That's because every Brahmin thinks he has to put his son through college. The country is full of them. Half of them are starving. They never get down here before 10.30 in the morning. They get up at dawn and pray for over four hours before coming to work. We got an untouchable working around here. He's the handiest truck mechanic in Bombay and gets $200 a month. None of these Brahmins could even ride with him let alone compete on a job. Sure they sell bath water. More power to them. You Canadians buy oil stock, don't you?"

"Sure we do; what does that prove?" "Perhaps nothing, perhaps it proves that you get gypped."

"Well?" "Would it surprise you to hear that a person seldom gets gypped in India?" "Surprise me? It would baffle me."

"Well, have you ever been to the Streets of Gold?" "No, what is this a gold brick story?"

"No; let's go and I'll show you."

We climbed into an open car and rolled up beyond Victoria Station to the Bullion Bourse.

For ten crowded blocks nothing but gold or silver. Solid gold. Coolies who never owned a dollar in their life jog through the streets with a fortune in coin on their empty heads. Never a guard. Hundreds of men sprawl on the sidewalk with tiny scales in front of them and gold all around. One man's pile often overflows into the next but they never sink stilettos into each other's ribs.

If you want to buy a chain or ring or stickpin you buy it by weight. Practically the same price regardless of the work on it. A mystical hand-carved watch chain costs little more than its weight in gold. It is never stamped or hall marked, but if you want to make the merchant furious just question the quality. He'll hit the roof and forget all about that campaign of non-violence. Give him credit folks, Ranjhi Din or Gungha Din or any of the other Dins are honest bozos.

Few greater contrasts exist in the shopping world than between the bazaars of Cairo and of Bombay. Both sell similar stuff—mostly junk. Silks, jewels, amber, perfume, gold, brass, ivory. In Cairo you must absolutely fight your way through. They grab and clutch and scream at you to buy. They'd steal the brass ring from a bull's nose.

In Bombay they ignore you; pay no attention whatever. Often they won't sell to Britons at all. Shop after shop has tiny display cases with men squatting on the ground reading the paper. Beautiful goods but what of it?

I strolled through this midway of millions all

day. A fabulous place. Starving beggars, smeared from head to foot in mud and manure, beg from near-sighted babus who sit surrounded by gold. They don't think of stealing; they seldom get any money. Sacred cattle placidly amble through the crowded streets. I saw a cow and calf nonchalantly lie down on a pile of gold and nobody thought of disturbing them. Behind this shop a boy was turning out carved signet rings in silver. I watched him for a long while and at last his father asked if I'd like to step in. They made me comfortable on a white cushion and brought me betel nut.

These men were Sikhs, big rawboned brutes from the hills. "How much for the rings?" They weighed one up. "One four, sahib" (38 cents).

"Solid silver?" "Yes, sahib—you like nice souvenir?"

"Yes." "Got rupee?"

"Yes." "Give me rupee."

With infinite patience he melted down the silver coin and shaped it into a ring. A smart filigree signet ring.

"What monogram, sahib?" I wrote G. S. which he translated into Hindustani and had the carver cut it into the ring. No charge for that. A 30 cent coin turned into a real native souvenir of 30 cents.

While I was there many goldsmiths came to buy bullion. They bought an ounce or two and came

back with it shaped into all sorts of surprising trinkets. For their work they were paid so much above the gold price—but not much. Here is a shopper's paradise if a man wants something striking and original in gold. As a rule, however, there is less originality than between one inner tube and another. They all go for swastikas, carved cobras, six-armed goddesses, elephants and pagodas. If I had the cash I'd get a carved goddess to hang on the home grown watch chain.

Across from where I sat was a bathing ghat. Water is brought here daily from the Ganges. It looked reasonably clean. Hundreds of people sick with sores, crippled, blind, feverish and mad came to the blue arch, kicked off their shoes and plunged in clothes and all. They wallowed and sang. Black magic this. They scooped up handsful of the water and drank it.

Over the pool was a scarlet statue of a fat elephant. A whimsical elephant this; sort of roly poly and friendly. But he is Ganesha, a bold bad bogey man, son of Siva the destroyer and Kali the terrible. A tough guy if you get the idea.

Inside this tiny temple was a wholesale crop of nuts. A whiskery old egg in the corner stood on his head. He stands on his head all day, every day. It's his idea of a good time. Another crawled around on his hands and knees squeaking like a rat. At home we'd lock him up but here they bring him rice and dates and limes. Another bimbo, rather intelligent looking, stood

with his hands held high above him. The arms were shrivelled up until they were thinner than a broom stick. The fingers were thinner than pencils because even the bone had shrunk. He has been standing with his hands up for seventeen years although he sometimes moves about.

All of these madmen are supposed to be holy. They've got some stand-in with the gods which permits them to decide what sort of person they'll be in the next life. You and I and the iceman are liable to come back and be jackasses or monkeys or bobtailed emus; whatever they are. Not so these fanatics. They have it all fixed up with Kali the killer that they'll come back as chorus girls or home run hitters or radio crooners. You see a Hindu figures that unless he's a good fellow he'll come back as a three-toed sloth but I can rather imagine a three-toed sloth if somebody told him he was coming back as a Hindu. But perhaps I get foolish. It's a funny world. That ancient wise guy who said one-half doesn't know how the other half lives, probably visited India.

On the way back to the waterfront we found ourselves in a parade. A throbbing, booming, bellowing parade. A parade headed by a dead man. The dead man was tied into a chair and carried on the shoulders of Gandhi's gang.

This man had been a Gandhi follower run down and accidentally killed by a post office truck. The Gandhi gang, insane with rage, shouted that this was plotted and planned. The man being a Gandhi

follower was deliberately slaughtered on the streets. It was a silly accusation of course, but it later caused the spilling of much red blood; some of it mine.

Our car got stalled and wedged among the shouting paraders. The body, close by, flopped loosely and idly about in the wooden seat. A second white man, a little frightened, jammed his way through the crowd and stuttered: "What's doing—what are the blighters up to?"

"You got me; looks like they're going to auction this guy off—what's that they shout?"

"To the holy Chowpatti Sands." "Holy sands—do they call these holy?" "Yes, yes. The Mahatma is a holy man. He made a few pans of salt here amid an assembly of press agents and photographers."

There was more screaming and yelling. Somebody heaved a rock at me. Two more rocks came along. Another white man caught one in the shoulder. He never even took his pipe from his mouth.

"You better get out of here," the stuttering man said. "Not a chance. I came half-way around the world to see this. What about you?" "Oh," he said, "they shan't bother me. But you better go. They are going to burn this chap on the holy sands. We shan't let them make a blooming martyr of him, that I'm sure."

Sure enough, without the slightest uproar or disturbance a few truckloads of troops came rolling

from Malabar Hill, a field gun drawn by a big brown lorry rolled quietly up from another direction, and an officer made a little speech.

He was a dinky little officer this. Fair and pink and very confident. He just told the celebraters, politely but firmly enough, that it was okay by him if they wanted to burn up their friend, but the proper place was at the ghat on Queen's Rd. No bodies were going to be burned on the sands now or any other time. Is that clear?

There was mumbling and hissing and all that, but nobody bounced a rock off this chirpy little guy, and that seemed to be that. A sergeant growled "Come on—get on with it," and they headed the body back to town and burned it up. So ends the second act.

Later the home town Hindus pulled a hartal. That might sound important, but it's something like Rover boys calling each other smarty-cat. Just to show they were mad, about 75,000 of the great unwashed came down Hornby Rd., the main boulevard, and squatted soundlessly on the car tracks. They just sat there. They had to sit some place, and this was a way of showing that they were peeved. The car drivers, themselves Hindus, and mostly low caste at that, saw what was up and nonchalantly changed routes. I happened to run into this too, while going to a movie.

The whole street from side to side was blocked by these silent squatting figures. Hartal is it? I'd call it Indian insanity. After you've been out

here a week you get the Englishman's idea "get on with it", so I still went to the movies. I might have got jostled about if I'd walked through the mob, so I went around.

Coming back was the most ludicrous sight of all. The cops had been told to clear the street, so there were about 50 barelegged cops, with dinky yellow hats on their ears, and broom handles called "lathis" in their hands, chasing nearly 100,000 yowling idiots. If a cop would just look at one of these shrouded guys he'd set up a bellow and start for the distant Himalayas. It was too nutty for words. The mob—if they had either courage or staying power—could have turned on those cops and ripped them to shreds. Instead they scampered screaming away as fast as their bare legs would carry them. A great adventure this. Like boys running away after ringing doorbells.

Days afterward, however, smouldering anger broke out into active rebellion. Heads were smashed; a few ribs cracked, one man killed. The death of the congressman started it and then infuriated followers of Gandhi commenced picketing the gold bazaar from where bullion was being exported to England. "Satanic England," they said.

On this occasion I joined four oldish, fattish Americans and we hurried to the Street of Gold to see whatever there was to see. The crowd was terrific. We tried to get through in a car but it was hopeless. Each stop found us more and more

in disfavor. Eventually one group of hoodlums bore down to get us.

The head man, wearing a mustard yellow turban, was howling and the yes-men were hissing when the driver explained we were all Americans and thought the Mahatma a smart guy. To prove it we scooted into a Svadeshi shop and bought Gandhi hats. The four Americans came out wearing these while the ever increasing mob smiled and cheered in delight over these rebel recruits. I didn't wear my hat. I'm British and glad of it.

I did buy one of the things as a souvenir and insurance policy but kept it in my pocket. With the hats on we were cheered and allowed to pass through the war zone. We came to a great open field where a half million or so men were held in check by a few hundred cops and after that the driver gave his car the gun and the Americans hurried back to their China bound ship.

Now in this country of filth and squalor the white man has a standard of cleanliness set for him miles above what I'm accustomed to at home. Among other things he has to dress for dinner every night including Sunday. I went to dress and discovered that some prowler had run away with my shirt studs. Next day I went back to the gold bazaar to buy some more. They are cheap there and vastly different.

Huge milling crowds packed the district. Fires burned in the road. I rounded one corner where three Bombay garbage carts were going up in

smoke while drums throbbed and cymbals clashed. Most of the shops were closed. The market was surrounded by Bengal lancers on horseback, and native infantry. I never saw a white man in the place; not even the officer of the lancers was white.

Trying to adopt the John Bull attitude of business as usual I went about the task of buying my studs, got them and tried to clear out. A parade of girls carrying tri-colored congress flags came up the street singing. Two of these started to pick on me. They spoke good English, called me a London pig and finally seized my hat, tossed it into the blazing garbage cart and marched on.

I headed off in the opposite direction. A cow plodding straight through that thick mob caught me straight in the stomach and down I went. The cow stepped on my knee and ruined a white suit. I noticed a few fanatical chaps with manure in their hair and ashes streaked down their bare hides were following me. I knew my way out and started to go. The sadhus, or holy men, followed but didn't say anything.

I came to an open spot near a hospital. There were a lot of taxis there, but they wouldn't carry me. They didn't say they wouldn't; they just didn't pay any attention. I sat in the back of one until a gang gathered around. The men, up to now, had not bothered me, a woman with a naked baby rallied around and started begging. She kept slapping her own bare stomach and slapping the

baby. I never gave her anything. She reached back into a tiny shop, picked up a brass jar and smacked me right over the head with it.

I felt the bump and it was bleeding just a little. I had no hat and the sun was bad. The woman stood there screaming and slapping her stomach. The silent sadhus with the awful smell had come up too and just stood there. Two of them were naked as babes.

"Double fare," I offered the taxi chap.

That's the worst thing I could have done. He knew now I had the breeze up. Formerly I had at least looked cocky and confident. The thing to do was order him—not ask him—to do something. He gave me such a funny look that I got out. The beggar woman seized my lapel in a clawlike grasp and ripped the whole front of the coat. Two boys of ten or so grabbed my back and completed the rip down my shoulder.

A street car passed so I jumped on and started south. The people on the car looked at me curiously. I was certainly anxious to see a white face somewhere. The head wound was bleeding a little more and the flies got on it. I mopped it with a handkerchief and it was bleeding pretty badly. The car seemed to lose me. There was shouting and yelping all around but I couldn't see a cop anywhere. Finally we came past the university and there stood at least 300 police all lined up with lathis—ordinary broom sticks—ready for action.

Just as we stood there a group of women started hurling rocks and sticks at the cops. They took it all silently. Then I noticed a white man. Stocky this chap and confident. He gave the word and the cops roared down with their clubs going. The shirt-tail mob of Gandhi put up a fight and it looked as if the police were licked. I ducked, bought another Gandhi hat and put it on. The shouting and screaming fell behind.

I came to a big house which seemed vaguely familiar. Sure, this was the home of the Hindu priest. The best defence is an attack. Why not go in? I rolled right in. There was a vast bed there with a step leading up to it. A bed for twelve people in the living room. The priest and four or five others were in it. The priest wore a purple nightgown and was furious to see me walking in there. I showed him the blood from my head and asked if he'd wash it for me or get me a doctor. "There is a doctor at the ghats," he said. "You should go there." "Ghats—why that's where you burn the corpses."

"Yes, yes. But there must be a certificate to say they are really dead. Go there and they will fix you. Sorry about your head, sahib. They thought you were British." I thought this a poor time to get patriotic, so I went out, after he gave me a note in English.

All the weird and wild medicine men and charm doctors have their little stands near the priest's home in Bombay. I walked past these and they

all offered to fix my head. When I came into the Maidan district, just above the ghats, the police had rallied around with reinforcements and were causing havoc and broken heads right and left. Fires burned, people ran pell mell with their shirt-tails out, heads were smashed, ribs cracked.

It was quite a war until somewhere in the distance a machine-gun rattled. That was enough. The Hindus retreated and came galloping down the road sweeping everything before them. I sprinted like fury along the big stone wall with all the labels on. The labels read, " Boycott British Goods ". There was no traffic except a Paramount news reel truck resolutely standing there to film this uproar. The first gate at the ghats was locked. I ran the quarter mile to the next one and was stopped. I flashed my pass and they let me in.

The doctor was fat and stuttered. He washed my head with ordinary Bombay water, which is about as bad as water can get. Then he shaved it with a dull, scraping razor and cauterized the wound. We were at a small back window overlooking the pyres. My head throbbed and I felt sick.

There were fifteen bodies burning and two waiting. While I sat there they unwrapped one and smeared him from head to foot in soap bubbles. Then they poured some red stuff on the face of the corpse and set him ablaze. While the man was plastering up my head the mob screamed and screeched outside the walls, the flames ate up

through the bodies and I saw a pair of feet drip grease and slowly fall off into the hot ash below. A furious country this. Savage. Survival of the fittest.

I came out feeling pretty dizzy. The streets were all cleared except for the police, but I had to walk the full three miles back to the Bunder where the white men are boss.

For a full week after that there was nightly uproar in the bazaars. The cloth market glowed a ruby red as chattering nationalists burned stacks of Manchester cottons, Huddersfield woollens and stuffed scarecrows made to represent Winston Churchill.

The British, clamping the lid on with a bang, rushed raiding squads of Punjabis all over the town gathering in suspects and swishing them off to jail so fast their heads swam. Pot shots echoed around the turbulent market as night grew on and one wounded a soldier within four feet of me as I stood among 100,000 howling Hindus in diapers looking like a prize fool in a dress suit. Not even a dinner outfit but tails and a boiled shirt, of all things.

In a land where men go around in doilies or loin cloths, or nothing at all, you and I who are white, have to put on dress clothes to visit the movies. Absurd and ridiculous but essential. No dress suit, no movies. A curly headed chap recently out of Harvard invited me to the movies with something of a flourish. As though we were going to take in a fireman's ball or something.

At the appointed time I was on hand, wearing a cap and cotton suit. He was all done in his party togs and looked abashed. "Guess I should have told you," he said discreetly. "We dress for the cinema."

"Not really?" "Oh yes, this is the East. They'll look at you if you don't."

"You mean the boys in the diapers will look at me?" "Yes, everyone will. It isn't done."

"What if you do do it?" "Well, you don't, but then if you did you'd be outcast, that's all." "All right, outcast it is. I don't mind. Let's go."

"Well, you see I have to live here," he said discreetly. "You're pushing on." "And that proves what? . . . Oh, sure, you don't want to go with me unless I put on the glad rags?"

He was silent, so I told him to go alone. No full dress movies for me. "Only takes a minute to change," he argued.

"I know but it's the idea. The home towners go to movies in a loin cloth or a form fitting dish rag and we have to put on a Hereford front. That's hokum. Besides I leave to-morrow. My stuff is packed."

"Come on," he urged. "Be a sport. I got a full dress that will just fit you." In the end I fell for this and got decked out like a bridegroom; even wore a gardenia. We roared up the Queen's Rd. past the burning ghats. They were busy and smelly. Some of the human ash floated down on the hard-boiled shirt.

When we got to the movies all the white men's seats were full and sure enough everybody was decked out. We rolled along to two other spots and each time went past those piled up human corpses. I had seen the other pictures; the boy friend hadn't, so in the end he went alone and I scoured the streets looking for a hack.

There was no hack. There wouldn't be, of course. There I stood looking like a prima donna while beggar women came around slapping their stomachs. Bombay beggars always slap their stomachs but I don't know why. I was a bit more conspicuous than a man in a diaper would be walking through Times Square.

With no hack, tram or taxi in sight I started to walk. There are few public telephones in Bombay, so the business of 'phoning for a taxi was ruled out. As I hoofed it along among the brown bodies, people stared. Soon I came to the cloth bazaars where the fires burned. Big rosy blazes with men in Gandhi caps standing around chattering like champagne-fed baboons.

They burned statues, made speeches, piled up books, suits, blankets and what not. The beggars bore down on me in hundreds waving their brass bowls. Another flock of women with jaundiced babes came around slapping themselves. They took up a rhythmic slapping until I finally tossed a few coins. That was horrible. Never again. They bayed and bellowed like bilious banshees. Awful.

As I kept going various youths with flame in their eyes grabbed me, pulled this way or that, spat. The fires grew higher and higher. When the police came they just stood around. The Gandhi leaders were dressed in uniform. Orange and blue. They were all lads of eighteen, or so. Neat-looking chaps. Well set up and quiet. So long as they stood in the open they were unmolested but when they started walking past a British cotton shop and shouting their little piece about the boycott, the police grabbed them, whisked them off to a night court and had them in jail before they could say a prayer. The sentences were four months and a $15 fine. None of these chaps ever owned $15, so that meant an extra six weeks in jail.

The hubbub grew and grew. A few soldiers came up and some fanatic let fly with a revolver. A chap near me caught a shot in the shoulder. The troops captured the man with the gun but didn't do any firing themselves.

They looked at me with curiosity but I decided to stick around. The beggars had finally let me alone. I seemed to be a neutral. From up near the station the whine of a police siren came, and a long silver-colored car came straight through the mobs on the road. Six white-coated police got out and gave orders to the Punjabis in blue to clear the road. The uproar came on in real earnest then as heads were cracked, so I hurried across to the station, knowing there would be taxis there.

Around the station was a semicircle of men with typewriters nonchalantly ticking away. They park there all day and most of the night, prepared to write letters for you in any one of four languages at twelve cents a letter. With bedlam burning and bullets being dished up a half block away, they were sublimely untroubled like the holy cows who sprawled there among them. Amazing country this one. Too goofy for me. To see those chattering men, most of them with great dobs of war paint on their necks, cheeks or foreheads, dancing like dervishes around war fires, you'd expect an interloper like me would be torn to shreds, but all you get is a few filthy paws clutching out and a halo of hisses.

Now I'm not going to bore you or myself with the causes of all this monkey business. It's all mixed up with voodooism, holy cows, salt, cotton, and fatalism, but the immediate cause was this.

Purshotamdas Tricumdas (sneeze and then give the Bronx cheer), a lawyer, graduate of Oxford and author of two books, was jailed six months ago for giving a speech in favor of Gandhi. Later he was released. He had served his whole time. At eleven next morning he was served with a notice to report at police headquarters at two-thirty, by three he had not turned up. By four arrested, by four-thirty fined and jailed for four months.

G. V. Kapadia, another lawyer, was treated exactly the same except that he went to jail for one year. Both men had what seemed reasonable ex-

planations. Neither had broken any law. They simply did not come to the police station when ordered and, under current emergency measures, were liable to be hanged. Imagine that. Hanged for not reporting. Probably I'm traitorously unpatriotic but if that's British justice then I'll see one more movie in a dress suit.

THE DANCING PRINCES

IN the sand hills of the three cobras near the gateway to India's second city stands a monument to paganism and mediaeval savagery. The British point to this as the curse of Gandhi. The missionaries come to shudder. The tourists don't see it at all.

As you roll toward the Poona Ghats from Bombay you pass the cotton mills. Huge sweatshops where the average day's pay is 41 cents and they work ten hours. Beyond are the palms and banyan trees. Shaded by these trees are six solid blocks of up-to-date apartments. They are equipped with electric light, air shafts, bathrooms, laundries. They are fireproof. They once were clean. Right now, except for lizards, bats and crawling invaders they are thoroughly and completely empty.

Around them sprawl unspeakable hovels of bamboo and palm leaf, putrid with filth and pestilence, smelling of blood, curry, musk, garlic and unwashed bodies.

In here a man is old at 30, withered and parched at 35, dead at 38. The drums of death and birth and marriage throb night and day. A place such as you who have never seen the east can never

picture and never believe. Now why? Why are those vast six-storey stone apartments empty while tens of thousands crawl and die in filth?

Well, believe it or not, they offered those apartments rent free to mill workers and the mill workers said poo poo. The places never were occupied. They probably never will be. The government built them from public funds and the mill mob refused to move in. Wouldn't have a thing to do with such idiotic new-fangled notions as separate rooms for separate families or baths or toilets.

They quote Gandhi as their patron saint of filth. Gandhi, remember, would drive every doctor and dentist from India. He would break up every hospital as "a place of quackery and creator of vice". He would prohibit the importation or manufacture of bathtubs. He would abolish railways and electric lights with one sweep of his hand. He would wipe out the cotton mills and substitute hand wheels such as he himself uses. Gandhi told this gang of nose-ringed hoodlums the new apartments were homes of the devil; so there they stand forlorn and deserted.

With my stomach turning somersaults I spent a day in this vale of smells and, believe me, boys and girls, if I have to line up for some free soup or go touching my pals for a handout I'd never do it again. If these people don't look out they're liable to send me home mad.

The women in here, frail, bony little creatures, wear rings in their noses. Not ordinary little

rings but big, jingling things. They carry babies astraddle their hips, build fires from dried cow manure, eat garbage, drink from the " tank " which is worse than you can picture, and use an open roadside gutter as a latrine. Privacy, of course, is unheard of. The most intimate domestic scenes get no more privacy than a bowl of goldfish. You are quite liable to turn one of the innumerable sharp corners and find a baby in the very act of being born there on the ground. Rabid dogs fight and yowl all over the shop. Nobody laughs. They don't know how to laugh. They eat one meal of rice and that in the early morning. They bow and bawl before a picture of a many-armed god with the head of a fiend. They die like flies.

I came upon one extraordinary sight during the day. Five men were standing under a palm gleefully splashing blood all over each other. They tossed quarts of it around, spattering themselves from head to foot.

It was goat's blood, but they were pretending it was the blood of women. Some ancient custom has it that the single men should occasionally come together and splash around in blood so there they were carrying out an age-old savagery. They didn't know why; didn't care.

No restaurants exist for miles but I was directed to a home where, I was told, they would give me food. The man here spoke English. He gave me rice but refused to eat with me. It would mean pollution for him. Already he was lower than a

snake's ribs but even an untouchable goes lower if he dines with an infidel invader like me.

With a napkin or loin cloth or something thrown over a series of open sores on his arm, this host brought a pasty smelly mess and grabbed a bit of it from the iron pail. He put this on a lump of cardboard and I was invited to eat with my fingers. I did, too, and, believe me, that took courage. Then he brought some ferocious looking cakes with purple icing. Five hundred flies fought with me over the cakes but I managed to down one—one cake, I mean. Then he brought some yellow stuff like sour cream. "Fromage," he said, "for the honored sahib." If that was cheese I'm Rudy Vallee. I gave up. The man then showed me his pet sores. They were lucky sores. He had been fired from the mill because of these but since then he had made far more money making cigarettes.

"Tell me," I asked. "Why do they call this the sand dune of the three cobras?" "The prince lives there, sahib."

"You mean cobras live here?" "Surely, sahib. The three dancing princes. You will see. I get the master."

"But hold on a minute—are these snakes wild. I mean, don't they kill people?" "Surely, sahib. Surely. You will see."

"But you don't understand; do you willingly let the most deadly snake alive breed here among babies and sleeping women?"

"It is the sahib who does not understand. The prince is my brother. How could I drive my brother away?"

I was licked to a frazzle, but I suppose the first hundred years are the hardest to understand this place.

The host of the running sores came back with a tall, striking looking chap and we went out among the squatters looking for the princes. I was honestly scared and wished I had high boots. The charmer and the man with the sores were bare-legged, of course. They had neither magic flute nor whip nor cane nor fear. We walked idly along among sights and smells that will never be forgotten. So far as I could see the charmer was doing nothing but I guess he can smell cobras. Anyway after about ten minutes he said: "The prince is near now, sahib."

"Not too near?"

He smiled at my terror. "He will be there," he said, pointing toward a round flower basket. I stepped back. He went forward and true to his word the broad black head of the cobra came up with a swish and sucking hiss.

"I make him jump, sahib."

"Hey," I screamed. "Wait. For the love of Mike—" Too late. He made some move and the great lithe body slashed maddeningly through the air. I was gone like a gun. I never even saw the thing land. Good jumping jupiter, they do take these things casually. A black cobra living

right among these people and they let him jump. From now on I do my jungle walking by motor car.

In case you are curious the yellow cobra with the black skull mark on his hood is the king. The black cobra the prince. All the ancient kings of Egypt wore a crown sporting a golden cobra to show that they and the reptile possessed the power of instant death. There is no certain cure for the bite of the hamadryad or king cobra, and he is said to be the only snake alive who will attack and pursue a man.

Working conditions in these Hindu cotton mills offer vast and fabulous contrasts. Some are appalling in their lack of sanitation and humane equipment. Others are reasonably clean and fresh, but in nearly all you find the mothers and babies of the workers sprawled behind the machine on which Pa is working. They just come along to watch Dad work and the clackety clack of the bobbins drowns out the squawl of babies and sometimes soothes them to sleep.

Imagine the clutter and uproar if our workmen were followed to the plant by a wife and anything from four to ten velvet-eyed shavers. Imagine the smell if they cooked papa's corned beef and cabbage abaft his lathe or bench, or what is it?

"The babies seem very quiet," I remarked to the blonde Dutchman who was steering me around. "Oh, yes, they feed them opium."

"Opium?" "Surely. It keeps them quiet.

When they start running around the little ones sometimes get caught in the machinery."

"Then what happens?" "Why, they get killed!"

"Well, what do the parents think of all that? Why don't they keep the babies at home?" "Don't ask me," the Dutchman shrugged. "We've given up asking why long, long ago. You see this chap here?" He pointed to a gaunt pencil-shaped man with long curls hanging down. Over his loom a string was stretched and there were banyan leaves hanging from the string. "This is to keep off the devils. This chap gets his long hair caught in the machinery sometimes. It pulls part of his scalp right off, so he thinks it's the great destroyer reaching up to get him."

"Well, why doesn't he put his hair up? He looks old enough." "Stop asking why in this country. You'll go crazy."

"But that cow manure. How can you go for that?" "Well, I personally don't. I don't come out here. We stay in the office. But there is always a herd of sacred cows around the place. Sometimes they come right in——we don't dare send them out again."

Out in the yard there were the usual assortment of idols and just inside the hall were five fat iron urns where people bowed and prayed and what not. Remember this is a factory; not a pagoda. "Those are the five Hindu products of

the cow—you know all about them," the Dutchman said wearily.

"I don't know all about anything." "Well, reading from left to right we have jar of milk, curds, manure, urine and something else. I think it's afterbirth or something. All sacred. All holy. They eat the stuff, drink it, make poultices from it, sleep on it, burn it along with dead bodies."

"What's a curd?" "I don't know. It's something cows have or give or do."

"And these idols out here—" I looked at one in amazement. Something you couldn't discuss in print. Sexually revolting. Then I noticed a flock of people in the mill had a picture of that indecent idol tattooed on their foreheads. I asked a lot of questions and took some pictures, but the board of censorship and public morals bar these from you.

"But this Kali," I went on. "What's Kali." "A god. Big league god. Probably the most sensible thing in Hindu theology. Kali is the god of destruction represented by time. Time destroys everything. Time will get you." "Not here, I hope. If I was to die right now I'd like to freeze to death."

We kept wandering through the smelly corridors with their clanking swish of cotton bobbins. Industrial India! Six thousand smelly shapes, fifty million fleas. Whiffs you never dreamed of. Vultures wheeling silently overhead. Rabid dogs barking and growling over the garbage. A fat woman

smoking a torpedo-shaped cigar butt. Babies with flies cluttering up their eyes. Spittoons that are never used. Pots of rice. Hunks of sugar cane. Lean boys. The grassy smell of sewage floating in from the "tank". They build their shacks from bamboo, banyan and mud. They scoop the mud from great holes and when the monsoon comes the hole fills with a stagnant, slimy mess. This is the village water supply, called the "tank".

I'd like to forget all this part of India and only remember the silvery moon across the Bundar at Bombay, the Taj Mahal in the evening, or the rustle of shore breezes among the palms and banyans. India should be seen at night with a gas mask on. A gas mask and high snake boots. Talk about the ash can of humanity? I thought once it was in desert Mexico, in the bazaars of Marakesh, Morocco, in the hillside slums of Marseilles. But here it stands festering like a great open boil on the cheek of the world.

We come out and watch the voodoo man ring boys' ears and girls' noses. A sleek Rolls-Royce passes with a coolie on the side holding the sahib's golf clubs. He's away for a spot of putting. What does all this festering death and dirt mean to the sahib? Nothing, not to me, anyhow. I'm a sahib and I haven't got enough sympathy for all these savages, not enough to go around.

The beggars come along limping and falling and whining. One pokes me in the ribs with the red stump of a hand. Gangrene or leprosy or pro-

gressive syphilis. One more suit for the cleaner; two dollars gone just because he touched me. I'm thinking of the declaration of independence . . . "we hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are born equal, entitled to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." Equal! Liberty! Happiness!

But no time for thoughts like this. They might reach up and gather you in like the great boa of Bengal. This is the place where a young fellow alone has to keep his eye on the main chance. Me, myself. They feed the babies opium! Jumping Jimminy, let's get away from here.

But even getting away has its problems. Being a white-skinned sahib in India's teeming territory of troubled travel easily wins the coal dust layer cake for tough sledding.

If you don't believe it just push a bevy of these buggy beggars aside and help me supervise the unloading of my travelling hotel off this coal bin on wheels. They call it a train, but I'm laughing. Here comes a coolie carrying a wash basin, pillow, typewriter and case of water bottles. Here's another, haughty in his job of serving a white man, with my bed on his back. Here's a third with a brace of bulging suitcases draped around his lean neck. This fourth bird carries some books and a chair for me. A chair, no less. Talk about pick up your bed and walk? Over here you pick up the whole bedroom and toss in a bit of portable plumbing for good measure.

I've got the brief case myself, because that contains papers and passports, pills and pistol. Here, arrogantly bringing up the rear, is my red-toothed bearer, proudly carrying a roll of toilet paper and a towel. On certain occasions he'll carry a cigarette, too, but that's his caste limit.

We've just come into Bombay Central from a four-hour trip. You'd think to look at us we were advance guard for a caravan crossing four continents by camel, but it's only been a little run down Poona way.

If you in Toronto or Chicago or Detroit want to hop along to New York some day you pack a bag, pick up a ticket and go in comfort. There are porters aboard to make your bed, waiters to serve you food and magazines to read. If you want to wash you find a clean room lavishly supplied with soap, towels, matches, hair brushes and mirrors. At the end of the journey you can, if you want, take a street car to a boarding house and park yourself there. Or you can go to a first-class hotel and live the life of Reilly. Not in India. Oh, no. You book two tickets well in advance. One for yourself and one for the man who looks after everything.

You pack, lock and bind everything you own on earth and send that ahead with the bearer. By some bit of masterful efficiency he manages to make things comfortable in this steam bath on wheels. Even the typewriter is propped up so that the only thing lacking for a letter or report is

ambition. Even if you're only going four hours he spreads out your bed and stands by prepared to tuck you in or croon a lullaby. If you are a real hooper dooper used to this sort of thing he'll set up your collapsible bathtub in a vacant compartment.

It's all pretty handy until you get a sheet of paper half the length of a python detailing such things as: "Replacing lost collar button, one tin shoe polish, six buttons, one new needle, coolies entering station, coolies entering train, quinine for master—which he never takes; shortening sleeve in shirt, cigarettes . . ."

These items go on by the gross and you're hors de combat. How do you know how many needles the guy breaks? How many buttons are pulled off and lost? How many bristles are missing from your tooth brush? You're licked on that stuff. Take shirts, for instance. The travelling butler boy decided that mine were awful. Well, what of it? Some of them are awful. I admit it. Without any instruction he finds one that actually fits me—made to measure in Spain—takes all the others to some sidewalk seamstress and has the shirts taken apart and rebuilt. Then I get the bill. I squawk and demand, how come? He's very bland and winning about it. "Master's shirts fit too loosely. I fix." That's all there is; there isn't any more.

On arrival here I had to dig up a sun helmet. Some shopkeeper saw me coming and dug out a

pre-war model which instantly branded me as greenhorn tourist and a sucker on the hoof. I bought it for $3 because I didn't know anything about the things. The bearer was aghast. This was a monstrosity, and he said so, insisting he buy me a real hat. Luckily a girl tossed the original in a fire during a street brawl, so the bearer was happy again. He ambled out and bought me a far better hat for $1.25.

Beds are the same. Only one train in all India supplies bedding. That's the blue Bombay-Calcutta express. On all others you have to supply everything yourself from towels to water. I went to an English shop to look at all this stuff and was offered rentals at $15 a month plus disinfection charges, or purchase of a roll, sheets, pillow, four towels and one thin blanket for $24. But if you go to the bazaar for these things you get them half price; cheaper if you're a good talker, almost free if you happen to be a friend of a rajah's friend.

Perhaps you're sitting in a homegoing street car now wondering what a bozo like me wants with a servant tagging around. Well, if you show me a white man able to cross India without one I'll start Niagara Falls running uphill for you. He's a necessary evil like taxes and coffins and jobbers.

Everywhere you move here you bump smack into the idiocy of caste. A white man's bearer is usually fairly well up in the caste scheme and snootily declines to do the things you expect of a servant. While writing a letter home, for in-

stance, I caught my hand on a broken Bombay desk lock and cut it. Nothing serious, of course, but over here you dive for the iodine bottle quick. I dropped the bottle on the stone floor and it spread in a yellow brown patch.

"Bearer—clean that up."

Clean it up? He was furious. He, a gentleman's servant clean? Why, he wouldn't even tell the untouchable to clean it. He tried to be very patient in explaining all this to me, "because master not be in India before". Then he went to the door and clapped his hand with the demand, "hamal". The hamal, a ringnosed black messenger, was instructed to get the untouchable, who arrived scraping and bowing. The hamal stood by to see that the job was done right, but the almighty bearer vanished. He wouldn't be in the same room with an untouchable. I'm probably defiled beyond all redemption, but what of it? However, in such a case you do know that a fresh bottle of iodine will be there in one hour without your asking for it.

Servants, to the average greenhorn globe girdler, are the greatest problem, the greatest menace in all India and worse than snakes or bugs or tigers or fevers. During my first week in India I stopped at a big hotel with corridors 200 yards long.

Outside every door along that corridor bearers squatted most of the day, half the night. When I, or any other white person passed, they would leap up and humbly bow. I'm not used to that

sort of thing at home. Among my own pals are several servants; all good eggs. This sort of obsequious attention by the blacks embarrassed me but there is no way of overcoming it.

One day I returned from a Bengali wedding at Poona, ate a greasy lunch and climbed under the mosquito net to sleep. Soon afterwards a feeble but persistent knock came at the door.

"Go away," I shouted.

Another knock, "Scram."

Still another knock.

"Impshi," I yelled, but still a knock came. I got up, tottered over to the door with a towel held over my naked hide, and found there an old bearded man. He gave me one look as if I was a walking ghost and stood trembling. He had wakened the wrong man. Horrors! He actually quaked like a leaf, clasped his hands together and sank mumbling to the floor. No joking about this; he was terrified. A white man, supreme big poobah of all creation, was disturbed from sleep. Kali have mercy on me!

He spoke no English, but I didn't know this, so I helplessly asked the old guy what room number he wanted. He figured I was bawling him dizzy —the expected thing—so he sank down and whimpered for mercy.

For every high hat Hindu diplomat or rajah who solemnly blabbers platitudes in Downing St. there are a half million who bite the dust at the finger snap of an English clerk or Tommy.

In Germany, if you want a waiter, you politely say, "Her Ober," which is short for "Mr. Head-waiter". In Japan you call "Honorable Boy". Here, no matter if the man really is a head waiter, you bellow "boy". The seasoned Indian sahib never tips and never praises, but he certainly does some bawling out. Demands service and gets it.

Yesterday a ship for Australia blew in and 50 tourists had a day ashore. One of these, a woman, got lost up-town. A soldier came down the main lane, so she asked him, "I say, could you tell me where I'd get a taxi?" Hardly stopping his stride the trooper said to the city at large, "Boy—get this lady a taxi"; and one was got. I don't know what would happen if the boy refused. They never do refuse and that's all there is to it.

If you once get pally with the Hindu horde you'll find regular residents sitting down beside you some time with "I say, old chap, probably none of my business but just thought I'd put you right about these coolies. May be decent chaps and all that but one must order them about . . ." They go on rather diplomatically. You get the idea.

Among the squatters outside my door day and night is the most industrious little man I've ever met. He sits there sewing with a machine. A special sort of gadget this, worked by hand instead of foot. It's certainly tough sewing with a machine right on the floor and it takes no keen observer to see that this chap is going blind. But he works all the time, night and day, Sundays and holidays.

Every time a white man goes past he has to chuck his sewing, stand up and salaam and then start in where he left off. To me he says, "Good morning, master," whether it's midnight or dawn. I'd like to say, "Carry on Oscar, don't get up," but if I did the woman who owns him body and soul for $8 a month, would drop me a hint some time. It wouldn't be a gentle hint either.

It's all a bit complicated and vague. No wonder these people are commencing to squirm under the yoke of inferiority and hopelessness.

Take me in my casual doings with the browns. A tall slim Goanese wakes me in the morning with a pot of tea. His job is the tea; nothing else. He goes away and a Mohammedan with a ring in his nose pitter patters in to clean shoes and lay out togs. When I'm comfortably on my way to breakfast this Mohammedan summons the untouchable. I'm never allowed to see this fellow. He's an outcast. He slips in and cleans out the ash tray, wash basin and the floor, brings the portable toilet or thunder box.

Down in the dining-room there are three waiters to take care of me. They hop around like hens with a brood of chicks bringing me this, that and the other. The combined wages of these six men is less than a dollar a day and they don't rate tips. Yet it costs me about 50 cents a day for drinking water. If I were to complain, justly or otherwise, about these birds they'd get fired on the spot. No appeal or argument. And in India there are no

doles, bread lines, relief jobs or other insurance schemes for the worker who has no work.

An odd country this. Full of assistants to the assistant assistant of the fifth assistant. What it really needs is a good bouncer to kick the holy heifers off the sidewalk. If I trip over one more churchly calf, I'm going to heave the thing into the road myself and see what happens. Meantime I'm beginning to understand this bunk about the white man's burden. His job is the job of being a sort of stuffed shirt windbag making natives behave.

THOSE HOLY HEIFERS

ALTHOUGH what few missionaries I met said Hindu justice was pretty much of a joke in the smaller villages which spread across India like a rash, the city courts are usually free of monkey business. Even here however, you occasionally see the solemn but absurd picture of a witness in court swearing to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth by reverently kissing or touching the tail of a sacred cow.

The Bull of Bashan, whoever he was, certainly had nothing on the millions of hump-backed bovines who bungle through the boulevards, buildings, beaches, bazaars and boneyards of Bombay and outer India.

They clutter up the sidewalks, sleep in stations, eat in shop windows, crowd the temples—where they usually sleep—and run amok in office buildings.

There are 15 sacred cattle in India for every man, woman and child in all Canada. Think of it. Sadhus, yogis, gurus and other holy horrors follow them about day and night.

It's a far greater religious sin to kill a cow than kill a man in India, so thousands of sick, maimed and starving brutes stumble haphazardly about

the streets waiting a merciful death. Let you or me or the peanut man put one of these brutes out of misery and our blood will stain the cobble stones of the market place.

I did run foul of a sacred bull one day and frenzied screams tore the air. It was in Victoria Station, Bombay's vast, vicious and crowded terminus. The goofiest station I ever hope to see. I sprawled near this station reading Kipling. The outside heat was almost as bad as the inside stink. It's bad enough at any time, but I happened to be surrounded by goats. Brown goats. Only one thing smells worse than a live brown goat in India. That's a dead brown goat in India.

Anyway, there I was inhaling atmosphere by the ton. Thick atmosphere. The idea of being there was to pick up a sacred cow and follow her about to see what really does happen to a holy heifer.

As I sat there, perspiring like a hose, a black-bearded Muslin came by with his three wives and six children. Gay little gaffers these. Full of pep and grins and mischief. The Mohammedans don't fall for this rot about kissing cows or burning your dead or ringing the kiddies' noses. They are family folks like you and me.

This fellow had some errand to run so he left the six kids with the three wives and vanished. One tawny skinned shaver yelled after his dad and started to follow. The woman tried to grab him, but he was away unsteadily on his chubby little legs. At this moment a gaunt, bony bull started

bearing down. The lad was right in his path and my observations had already told me that a Brahminee bull won't turn aside for old Nick himself.

The chubby legs carried the little fellow right toward the bull. There was going to be trouble sure, so I hopped up and smacked the brute over the nose with a stick. He turned aside all right quivering with amazed fury and the fat little legs were soon gathered up by their mother. But my troubles only started. A man with a wild look in his eye and long matted hair came at me like a raving maniac. He screamed in fury. I started backing out. Others joined this fanatic. They shouted like musical comedy villains and tossed their arms around a bit wildly. I kept backing up and I'll be a son of a gun if I didn't back straight into another cow and fall on it. The thing was placidly munching a melon there on the stone floor and gave me one of those offended looks.

A gallant looking Punjabi cop looked on with interest. The gang increased to about 40 howling Hindus, three dogs, eight goats and two cows. I decided not to back up any more. I knew they wouldn't fight; just argue. From somewhere among the cow protectors a woman approached with a greasy wooden bowl in her hand.

"You struck the mother," she challenged in a hurt voice. "Mother? It was a bull." "The bull is the Hindu mother. He is present at birth and death and celebrations."

"Well, I'm sorry, Miss, but he was going to step right on that little shaver. . . ." She held out the greasy bowl. The gang were quiet now and what few white men were in the station paid no attention whatever. The peach-colored Punjabi came closer fingering his bludgeon. He was probably on my side. The Mohammedan father discreetly kept in the background holding young Abdul on his shoulder.

The bowl didn't mean much, so the woman said, "For the pinjrapole." "The what?" "The pinjrapole." "What on earth is a pinjrapole?" "A hospital for sick cows. You will contribute two rupees (60 cents)."

"Nonsense," I said. "Tell your Aunt Emma." "A Brahminee bull has been insulted, outcast, it is two rupees." She thrust the bowl forward and touched my chest.

"Listen, Miss, I can see six fighting bulls killed by Spain's master matadors for two rupees. You better collect from your own people."

"Outcast," she screamed. "Okay by me, Miss." I headed for the big arched doorway and the entire group followed. They did a little hissing but most of the bedlam had died down.

I went out and got into a taxi. The gang screamed a bit, but the bowl woman was gone. "To the temple," I said to the driver. He looked blank. There are hundreds of temples in Bombay. Most of them are smaller than a grocery shop. They belong to private families who charge people

to come and bow before a plaster elephant or a brass woman with six arms.

"Kali temple," I added. The driver was a bit uncertain but shot away. We came to a tiny stink hole back from the road. It had once been sky blue and was roughly the size of a bank teller's cage. A temple, believe it or not. A pair of stout Sikhs barred my way. "I want the priest," I said. "The master of the Brahminee bulls."

They were about to give me the breeze when a mussey old gent, naked to the waist except for glasses, looked at me without interest and said, "I represent the twice born."

I told him I was a newspaperman curious to know how a sacred bull got that way. "Are they born sacred or do they get converted or what?" The old boy looked mad about things so I grinned. "I'm Canadian. We're not up on this."

"You may come in," he said. I started in. "Your shoes," he warned. I looked at the floor. Boy, oh boy, what a floor! Not for $10,000 would I walk there barefoot. Life is pretty sweet.

"Sorry," I explained. "Got a sore foot, I don't think . . ."

"Yes, yes," he scowled. "Good-day."

That was that. But I found out from another priest that Hindus who want to get a real stand-in with the pink elephant and the brass flapper with the six arms buy a cow or bull—any cow or bull anywhere—and give it to the Brahmin who brands it, puts a ring of gay beads around its neck and

turns it loose to crowd you and me and Oscar off the sidewalk. Or, if he feels like it, to eat our straw hat. Already there are millions of them at large and the folks aren't half trying. One year of India and I'll be cutting out paper dolls.

CRASHING THE GATES

ASIA'S fastest train and India's only Pullman Special provided me with two gate crashing adventures as we steamed 'cross continent to the sweltering metropolis of Calcutta. First I accidentally crashed the private suite of a rajah and later a monkey crashed in on me.

Taking it all 'round it was a field day for excitement starting with the discovery of a black cobra in the hotel grounds and ending up with a monkey biting me on the shoulder.

After a day among the British big wigs at Bombay's elaborate race track I told the hotel folks I was checking out and asked them to add up the bad news. My greasy gargoyle was tipped off to pack and I parked under a garden awning to read.

Several little girls were playing field hockey there until one of them let out a scream, " Mama, a snake. A big black snake." She pointed to a shadow abaft a hazard on the runt golf course.

The taxi driver heard and came out with a long leaded club. Another rushed over with a bamboo pole. This chap unfastened his white turban and tied it to the end of the pole, then dangled the pole in front of the snake. The thing reared up

in that menacing shape you're never likely to forget once you see it, pounded like fury at the rag and then squirmed away.

Half the hotel staff were out by this time making a grand hullabaloo. They got water and poured over a crack where the snake had crawled. He came out, reared up and ready to go. The man with the long bamboo pole teased him again and the snake struck so hard his fangs got tangled up in the turban. This was the big idea. The chap swung his turban around, twisting it farther and farther into the saw-edged teeth.

He hoisted and the wiggling black killer came up with him. He swung around several times to make sure the snake's teeth were so tangled they couldn't break loose, then he nonchalantly stepped on his tail and dragged. Boy, how he dragged. Talk about pulling a dozen molars. He just pulled that cobra's mouth inside out. Fangs, tongue, glands and everything else came, including tonsils and adenoids. The snake lashed around furiously like a chicken with its head off.

The captor, centre of admiring eyes, got a blanket and slipped the snake inside. He was just about to carry him away in triumph when the manager snapped: "And where do you think you're going?" "To sell the cobra, master. The fang-drawn cobra will bring 25 rupees ($7.50)."

"Put him down," the manager snarled. "Put him down." Then turning to a Mohammedan

taxi driver—"Abdul, kill him quick." Abdul needed no second bid. He just smashed that black cobra into a red pulp in about one minute. The Hindus, of course, were horrified because no Hindu will kill any snake.

The manager went away and from the front step of the hotel I heard another uproar. Lots of chattering and swearing. I looked up to see a group of brown coolies seizing my own luggage with the astonished boy looking about for me. As I went up the manager was naming me, "thief, fool, robber and bandit."

"What's all this?" I asked. "Are you a thief?" he demanded. "No, I am not a thief." "Then why send your boy off with the luggage when your bill is unpaid?"

Not 20 minutes before I had told that man I was leaving. It was still two hours to train time, but there he stood frothing at the mouth. My own boy seemed to lose that spirit of reverence for me and the hall staff looked on in glee to see this white man bawled out by a black.

The bill included the usual dozen extras and left me practically broke. I was burning up too, but what chance has a lone invader got against these skilled highwaymen? Jesse James at least wore a mask.

Some of my stuff was still aloft in the room, so I hurried up there just in time to see the floor waiter taking a long drink of shaving lotion while his varied assistants were pocketing what stray

articles the boy had left. At sight of me they rallied around like I was Santa Claus just going to unload a wad of presents. Instead of the expected tips I gave them the razzle dazzle.

It was a long, windy ride to the station, but I got there with an hour to spare. The bearer boy, surrounded by a chattering squad of half-naked coolies, was unloading my stuff into a gay yellow car. I sauntered in. Some car. Shelves full of rare old vintages. A stocked refrigerator, shower baths, two bedrooms, a sort of kitchen. Everything was glorious. I felt there must be something wrong but didn't make any exhaustive inquiry.

The mob outside was making the greatest racket I ever heard. Just a routine racket, but believe me they were going strong. The hour seemed to pass quickly. With a minute or so to spare, the conductor came along and got the tickets. A bell chimed and a whistle blew. Then a white man popped his head inside. "I say," he demanded, "are you Sinclair?" "That's me."

"Well, what the devil you doing here?" "Doing—I'm coming along for the ride."

"Devil you are. You should be away at the head of the train. This is the private car of a maharajah. He gets on at the next station. Come 'long, shift this luggage. Smartly does it. No messing about now."

I turned to the boy, probably the stupidest Hindu in Hindustan.

"What's the idea?" "Coolie say this master's car."

"Can't you read?" "No, master."

"Well, grab that bed and let's go."

He grabbed the bed roll, I nipped hold of a suit case and brief case, the inspector brought the other suitcase. We pushed our way up the platform crowded by chattering natives in every sort of garb ever seen by man. There were actually two in kilts. The train started to move off as we came to a big roomy compartment labelled with my name. We tossed the stuff in as the train gained speed. Then I missed the typewriter. "Sorry, inspector, I got to go back. My typewriter is there."

"You can't; fool." "I'm going. It's a new typewriter."

"All your other stuff will be stolen," he argued. "That maharajah will have me fired."

"Then stop the train. You've got authority." "Stop the Calcutta mail?" The rest was lost in clatter. Two red lights gleamed on the train's tail. The rajah's car. I pushed the door and jumped.

The typewriter was sitting beside the rajah's ivory inlaid desk. I picked it up, but there was no hope of getting off now, so I sat down and smoked as we rolled up through the blackness of a jungle night.

The long shelf of drinks and the refrigerator looked tempting. Might as well hang for a

sheep as a lamb chop. I poured out a long cool one. We clattered merrily eastward. Some fun.

Once you start a train journey in this festering land you are cut off from the rest of the world completely. A marooned sailor on a desert island can at least hang his shirt on a palm and hope. Here you just wait.

You find yourself parked in a full-width compartment usually alone. There is no corridor leading from one end to the other, no passage from car to car. Privacy in large doses. That's how it was as I rolled up through the dusty tiger lands on the rajah's royal suite on wheels.

Some rajahs distend their nostrils and grow furious at the very smell of a white man. Defiles them, they say, and make a great uproar about having everything the white man has touched, washed again. If his shadow has fallen on food the food is thrown away. They scour the plates too, and boil the table cover. I hoped this rajah, whose car I had captured, had more brains and planned a quick scoot to my own diggings as soon as we stopped.

Meantime I explored his marble bathroom with the roseshaped shower faucets, tried his gramophone, admired his silky rugs, examined his books and puzzled over a battalion of tin soldiers all decked out like Baluchistan brigands. I was so busy with the soldiers that we ran into a town before I had a chance to give myself the air and

there stood the maharajah completely surrounded by yes-men and flunkeys.

The mouths of the whole lot fell open when they saw me lining up the tin troopers. Then a sort of head flunkey or something made an eruptive noise in his throat and started questioning.

"Getting right off," I said, explaining I'd got into the wrong spot because of a thick-headed carrier boy. "I'm away; don't think you'll find anything missing. Sorry to have intruded."

The rajah was a good egg. He said, "You better wait" in English, barked a few curt orders in Urdu or Punjabi, or whatever it was, and the yes-men leaped about. About twenty of them crammed their way into the servants' room. The prime minister guy had a little room for himself and a vast distrust of me in his eye.

"Look outside," the rajah said. He was a real movie rajah in scarlet and gold brocade with a fabulous blue and silver turban. Fabulous in color and size. I looked and saw one big lighted sign. That was enough. The sign said "Plague" and at once I noticed the flames of the funeral pyres up the long straggly main street.

"What kind of plague?" "Bubonic—rat plague," he said. "Five deaths to-day. See, no one is about. This is a large town but they are all shivering in darkness, that is why we have hurried away."

The rajah and I drank a few of his iced vintages and talked far into the night. About three we

stopped at a small village and I hustled along the track to my own room which meantime had been claimed by two talkative Scots. They only remained for one more station and about four I had the place to myself.

Soon after dawn the boy hurried along the sand with tea, but I sent him away, pulled all the blinds and tried to sleep.

With the sun up the heat just drifted in across the sandy plains in waves. Low flat country this with only a few trees. India might be horribly overpopulated and all that but we rolled on for hours and hours seeing less than 100 people.

Once I got up for a drink as we ran into a siding next the weirdest-looking trainload of folks I ever did see. Pilgrims for Benares, the holy city, most of them naked, all of them smeared in manure and ash. Smeared from head to foot. Their eyes were festered too, and they all carried bowls for begging but never did the begging themselves. As our train drew in they sent their professional beggars over and they wheedled, coaxed and cajoled to such an extent I kicked in with a coin. This meant trouble because I opened the window and forgot to close it again. It was now about 9.30 in the morning but I was still pretty tired, so with all blinds down I sprawled in the bunk again.

We squeaked to another stop soon afterward and I lay there half dopey, when to my amazement, a big monkey scampered through the window, looked around, chattered, grabbed my toothpaste,

cigarettes and a piece of chocolate and ducked out again. I hurried over to close the window, when he was back with a pal. A bad-acting pal. The new arrival was smaller but he made straight for my watch on the bed. I don't mind telling you I was frightened. For all I knew there was a hundred of the things waiting to get in and if the car got under way before they hopped out again I was sunk. Imagine riding two or three hours with a roomful of monkeys.

Luckily I had a heavy Cairo club. I grabbed this and swung on the monk who was just reaching for my watch. I caught him on the hand, and he screamed. Never heard anything like it. He roared around that room chattering like fury. I scooped up the watch and put it in my pajama pocket. Then watching the enraged monk gallop around the room I opened the door of the compartment and fastened it. Then I slid along the panel, determined to attract help from outside or brain these brutes fast. The wounded monk cleared off. He'd had enough. The other stood at the threshold chattering and baring his teeth. A big monk this. Big and grayish red with long arms like a baboon.

There was a water bottle there, almost empty, so I let fly and it broke into splinters by the door. The monk barked, leaped in the air and in less time than it takes to tell he sunk his teeth in my shoulder. I grabbed upwards and knocked him down then struck out blindly with the cane. He

ducked a couple but I caught him across the back and he quivered a bit and was still, just as we moved off. All this time no one had passed to lend a hand. I kicked the monk outside and he fell on the opposite track where some Hindu boys gathered around in great excitement. The shoulder wound bled. There was a shower bath there, so I hopped in and kept under the hottest water I could stand.

Late in the afternoon we ran into one station crowded to the roof with a cheering mob who were on deck to welcome the rajah. He must have been the fellow whose car I had invaded. Anyway they were sure giving him the glad hosanna.

In the middle of this uproar my bearer came up, more or less out of breath. A big fellow carrying a leather billy followed. They came inside and I saw the bearer was handcuffed. The big invader who turned out to be a detective handed me a wire: "Mohan Lal, travelling servant Gordon Sinclair, accused of stealing coat from Bombay Laundry Co., search both master and bearer."

The detective stood there glaring. I got a funny feeling down my spine. Suppose this predatory Punjabi had put the stolen coat in my luggage; where did I stand?

"Go ahead and search," I said. "There is no need. We have found the coat," the man hunter answered. "Found it?"

"Yes, your boy had it. He is arrested." "A mistake, sahib. They gave me two coats. There

was not time to take it back." The boy argued.

It was a fact that there had been no time once we got away from the Bombay hotel, and it was likewise a fact the laundry had just been delivered before we pushed off. However, I remembered two occasions when my money seemed to become mysteriously less than I thought it was and didn't quite know what to do.

"You are responsible for the bearer," the detective said. "If you wish to sign this paper he may go on with you, but they might arrest him again."

The boy argued and pleaded with tears in his voice. He called on the name of four or five of his pet gods, named me patron saint of every Hindu alive and finally, getting some inner inspiration, said he would touch the temple bull for me if I'd just turn him loose.

Well, how many white men have an ambassador to the court of the sacred bull? Not you, or you, or you. Not even Babe Ruth or Amos 'n' Andy have a disciple at the shrine of triumphant toro. I signed the bond, wondering just what it all meant. Then I had to pay for a telegram and be a sort of lady's maid to this paroled Punjabi.

He got quite excited contemplating six months in jail instead of a tour through India. So excited that when we finally did roll into Calcutta's Howrah station he got all jammed up with the luggage and lost.

I fought my way through the usual moaning

mob, caught a dinky little wagon like an Irish jaunting cart and rolled across the Hooghly to a suburban hotel out near Kalighat.

The clerk who registered me seemed absorbed in all sorts of complicated finance on a slip of paper. He must have been trying to dope out the theory of light rays or something. Finally he motioned to me and we marched through two gardens, down an alley of tents, under a couple of arches and into a bungalow.

We went up two flights of stairs and the clerk, still trying to figure in the dark, sauntered into a room which was very much occupied. Very much occupied indeed. He came out and with the same key invaded another room. It, too, was occupied. He ran away muttering curses to himself and came back with another key.

So far as I could see we were in the heart of the great Indian jungle. Huge banyans were all around and the night was ebony black. The second key carried us into two occupied rooms and finally with a sigh we got into an empty one. Empty is right. There was a bathtub, sink and string bed. That was all.

"Send your servant to the godown for the other furnishings and bedding," he said. "All right—when he comes." The clerk went away still ticking things off on his fingers.

I sat on the bed of ropes feeling the monkey bite on the shoulder and the lump on my head from an earlier battering. Some country. What a life.

The bamboo screen jingled and a man done up like the King of Diamonds stood there announcing: "Your boy has been taken back to Bombay."

"You mean jailed?" "Yes."

"Well, where's my luggage?"

The King of Diamonds didn't know. What's more he didn't care. What's still more he wanted a tip.

"Listen," I said. "You come with me to find that luggage." He swelled up like a puff adder. Once more I had overstepped the caste boundary. He snorted and vanished in the black jungle night. I didn't know where I was except it was somewhere in India.

I had no bed or luggage, no aide de camp in a hotel where there are neither bed-makers or bell-hops. I started out with a sort of bleak outlook on life; then I turned back and sprawled on the rope bed without undressing and fell asleep with one of those to-Hell-with-everybody expressions.

When I woke up an astonished old man got up from a pile of beds, suitcases, chairs, rugs and coat hangers and announced he was my new servant. At least he hoped so. Before I had a chance to argue, he filled the room with furniture and it began to look cosy. A check on the luggage showed nothing missing, so I hired this new bimbo in a spirit of hope and rolled out for a peek at Calcutta.

BUCKETS OF BLOOD

IN India's largest, hottest, ugliest and most modern city is the shrine of Kali the Calcutta killer, goddess of destruction, mistress of death and any other fatalistic slogan you can think up.

Here pagan India reaches its zenith of blood-thirsty brutality. Buckets of blood run from Kali Ghat every day of the year as shrieking sheep and bellowing buffalo are guillotined to make a holiday for weary pilgrims from distant jungle lands.

The gruesome fascination of religious slaughter drew me to Kali Ghat soon after arrival in this stokehole of sun and smell. The place looked like a ladies' aid meeting. Women hemmed me in on all sides; women brought up the sacrificial goats, women dove into the blood and lapped it up with their tongues.

There were hardly any men about. Gradually I got borne along on a moving tide of women. At least 5,000 of them pushed and milled and heaved. We entered a low flat pagoda and the women began to yank at their loin cloths, saris and pull overs like school kids about to yell "last

one in's a sissy boy". In no time at all I was surrounded by thousands. They ran down steps and into the muddy Hooghly, poured blood over themselves, washed it off again, sat around gossiping, prayed to an idol, talked about Baby Joe's new teeth, twiddled their toes, played with their beads and generally behaved like an army of little girls age two. I was looking around more or less excitedly for a way out before some infuriated husband would find me and slit my veins, but the women eyed me with indifferent contempt and kept on chattering, drying themselves and otherwise behaving as women probably do in bath rooms the world over—only not when I'm around.

The route from the station to the temple of death was straight past the hotel and through streets that could have been New York or Montreal or Washington. They were no more oriental than Niagara Falls and about as interesting as the inner thoughts of an earthworm.

No matter where a passenger wanted to get on a bus to this Pool of Blood whether in the middle of a busy intersection or out on the car tracks the bus stopped for them. At the regular depots the conductor sang out a squeaky spiel coaxing more people inside. He must work on a commission basis. Nobody could be so energetic otherwise. We passed the Victoria Memorial which cost the price of eight Taj Mahals and looks about as pretty as a wedding cake that's been sitting in the sun.

We bustled through Bengal boulevards and got set down in a sandy field where beggars sat row after row under tattered umbrellas. These beggars all had pots and pans around them filled with food. They should have been fatter than a rajah because every batch of pilgrims gave them new stomach explosives. Raw fish and pigeons, balls of rice, peppers, mangoes, bread made from beans and stuff like that. None of the beggars ever thanked anybody. They just sat there with a million flies for company and thought about whatever beggars think about.

Most of the children were naked and chubby. The women wore pantaloons on their legs and draped a sort of towel over the rest of themselves. The towels kept falling off, but the women didn't care. Most of them carried babies straddled over their hips and tin pots on their heads. A good trick; try it some time.

It was a long dusty walk from the bus depot to the temple. All the way up little girls kept putting garlands of flowers around my neck and expecting a half cent for them. I looked like Queen of the May or something when I finally reached the shrieking slaughter house.

A flock of Brahmin guides in spotless white made noises like Brahmin guides and bore down. I said, "no guide," whereupon they spoke to the temple bosses—the temple is privately owned—and these fellows forbade me admission. Just a racket.

The Brahmin fellows came back with one of those "I-told-you-so" smirks so I said "how much?" knowing perfectly well the answer would be "as you like, sahib". That's always the answer, here or anywhere else on earth. It gives them a chance to argue afterwards.

"Name a price or we can't do business." "Whatever you like, sahib—there is no fixed fee. I show you everything and if you are not satisfied you pay me nothing." Same old hooey. You get it wherever you go. I finally pinned this egg down to 40 cents, no more, no less, and he sure did show me everything.

With pilgrims crying and sobbing all around us we roamed into an open yard to the bloodiest sight I ever looked at. A series of stocks were stuck up in the middle of a concrete floor and around them the hideous faces of Hindu gods. Goats, tethered outside in big tents, were bought by pilgrims for anything from $1.50 to $10 depending on size and dragged in by the legs. There was a decayed tree standing there with water spurting from the roots and bundles of human hair hanging from the branches.

The goat buyers were 90 per cent. women. They'd dip the kicking kid into the water gurgling up from a fountain near the tree and hand it over to the gorilla-armed giant with the double-edged sword who nonchalantly set the head in the stock and bam; no more head. He nipped them off

like you'd pluck a pansy. No effort at all except by the goats.

As the heads came off he'd pile them up according to size. They belong to him personally and he sells them for soup, but overproduction has put a crimp in the goat head market. The rest of the goat was tossed kicking and jerking into a corner where women leaped in and plastered themselves from head to foot in the blood. They smear it all over their eyes, hair and bodies in sticky potfuls, all the time moaning some kind of a chant to Kali. Usually they'd come running in like a slide to third base with the winning run.

Occasionally a man took a nose dive into the gore but not often. As I tightened my belt a couple of notches and started backing out a fat woman waddled in with a lumbering water buffalo on a rope. Powerful greasy beasts these. You see them pulling vast lorries or derricks or other heavy loads on the streets. They have necks the width of a bridge table so I looked for real action this time. Murder rules, in this saintly slaughter pen, don't allow any second chancers. One bam and no head, or a new bammer.

The buffalo was an enormous dumb cluck. He could have torn away and smashed his way to a glorious defiant freedom. Like a Spanish toro. Instead he slipped a few times and fell in goat blood, got up patiently, let them set his head at the right angle and swish. Off she came.

Gore spurted from his neck like a hose. Dark

maroon blood. It went up ten feet and sprayed all over the shop. Pilgrims shouted Hindu hosannas. Sticky warm blood slopped over my hat and soaked into my suit. The waddling woman who had brought the beast wallowed like a hog and your fleabitten correspondent took the air. But what I'd like to see now is somebody walk in on the knife swinger with a bull elephant and say, "Here, Oscar, take his head off with one clip."

Even the routine business of getting a hair cut, like taking a bath, washing your shirt or kissing your girl good-night has a superstitious religious significance in this country of contrasts, particularly down Kalighat way.

Half the experts you ask about it will dish out a different explanation but getting a hair cut is holy anyhow. Tell this to a Sikh and he'll probably answer "hooey" or "bologny" or something because he tries to be different. He's so different that he sprouts a pronged beard and rolls his hair up into a cute little bun on the top of his head. This looks and sounds sissified but never make the mistake of saying, "why hello dearie" to a Sikh unless you're a sprinter. Next to the Gurkhas he's the fightingest man in all India.

If you're a Punjabi or Bengali or Madrasi you go in for Gandhi head shaves and a trick pigtail so that the gods can reach down when you die and drag you up to paradise.

As I ambled through the noisy rest houses built by rajahs for poor pilgrims to the shrine of Kali the killer whole rows of barbers were lined up shaving skulls. With a dry raspy razor they were just scraping away at faces and heads and armpits leaving five or six dangling hairs to fly in the breeze.

It was a cool big room with people sleeping in layers, like seats at a ball game. Now and again a cow wanders in and steals the best beds but that's all right. I crossed a court where tricksters were doing stunts with coins and cards. There was a big blue "women only" sign there but I can't read Hindustani and roamed in. The place turned out to be a women's barber shop and they were being shaved too; only the ladies were lathered. Female razor wielders with tool kits strapped around their paunchy middles were scraping away at arms and legs and the backs of necks.

It's all laid down in a book of rules where a Bengal beauty can grow hair and where she can not, so barbers do boom business and sometimes take in as much as a dollar in a single day.

The Brahmin who was out to show me everything got lost in the shuffle somewhere so I was prowling around having a swell time. The women were mildly surprised and annoyed but didn't set up any holler. They just kept gossiping about babies. I knew it was babies they were talking about because a big lump of a female was demon-

strating how to feed a baby from a bottle. The other women thought it was a swell joke and kept passing the bottle around from baby to baby and trying it themselves. It got emptied two or three times but they just put water in and kept passing the thing around like a pipe of peace.

When I went out of this place I got caught up in the milling screaming mob of people all bearing down on the statue of Kali herself. Forced up a short flight of steps I stood with the reverent mob looking at the most fiendish looking statue you'd ever want to see. A black face with a red tongue dangling out nine inches. A necklace of skulls around her neck, a skirt made from human arms encircling puffy hips and four arms loaded with gold bracelets. One holds a man's head, one a knife, one a tin dish and the other nothing at all. The women did their daily dozen before this holy horror, the men just looked on with dumb vacant eyes which is an easy trick for a Hindu. More screaming people pushed up from behind so I got shot down the other side and from there roamed into the women's bath house.

Even here the women didn't put up a row at my invasion. They didn't say "Well, if it ain't Sinky" or anything like that, but when your imagination figures what would happen if a colored man sailed in among several thousand undressed American girls and compares that to the mild curses levelled at me here you just quit trying.

The Brahmin guide found me at last and stood

yelping at the door like an excited terrier. "Come out, fool—that's the ladies' room."

"I know, I know, I'm not blind; but how do I get out?"

The place was so jam full of females scratching and drying and rubbing themselves that I couldn't move. Some of them laughed at me and I laughed back. Why not? I made a try at getting toward this guide, but it was hopeless. The women were crowding in there so fast I had to turn around and go with the tide. They hardly paid any attention to me. I might as well have been the man come to read the gas-meter.

At the other end I broke loose at last and came to another of those trees with human hair dangling from all the branches and water spurting up from the roots. Women with babies in their arms were praying under the tree and putting money there on the marble slabs.

"Tree of life," the Brahmin said when he caught up to me. "Life?" "Yes, for women who are childless. They come here and pray at night. They pray for a baby and afterwards, when the baby comes, they wait until it is one year old. Then they come here and have his head shaved. They tie the hair into bundles and you see . . ."

I could see all right. More than he thought I could see. More hooey.

Behind a wall hundreds of goats were tied up waiting for the holy killer to lop their heads off.

We strolled along narrow shaded alleys with the Brahmin trying to interest me in Hindu mythology and work me up to the point of kicking in a rupee for charity. I wasn't thinking about him or his chatter at all. Besides he had ill-fitting false teeth that kept going up and down. They worried me. We rounded an iron gate and were in the burning ghat. I knew there was one handy somewhere. I could smell it. Since Calcutta has millions of people it needs several acres of burning ground, but this was just a little place about the size of a back yard.

"Extra holy," the Brahmin said. "Only rich people burned here."

Around the walls were marble statues erected to different maharajahs who had been burned there. One was an enormous fat old fellow about the size of a bay-window. They probably used a couple of trees burning him.

The sweaty worker who was tending the six bodies being burned chucked his job and swooped down on me for alms. He offered to rake out a souvenir from the fires, but I walked out. One burning ghat's like another to me now. I've had twenty weeks of blood and death and holy humbug now and I've grown a swell crop of alms resistance. This guy was about the most persistent I ever bumped into. He chased me half way back to the bus depot baying like a wolf for money, but it was no hits, no runs, no errors for him. Meantime his corpses spluttered and melted in

the heat while vultures looked on hungrily. I think I must be getting old or something; these things don't excite me any more. The first one I saw just turned the old stomach inside out. Now I could sit among burning bodies and chew a herring. I must be toughening up.

TIGER TRAILS

TO the Sundarbans for tiger! Here we go down from Calcutta on a fish smelling paddle wheeler run by mongrel scum from every water front east of Suez.

You probably think Sundarbans is the name of a cough drop or a race horse or something. Wrong. It's the heart of the Bengal jungle where the Ganges breaks up into hundreds of small muddy streams as if trying to turn backwards and keep its state of holy hokum rather than lose its name and shape in the outer ocean. We're nearing the home of the swimming tigers of Bengal. The greatest tiger jungle the world has ever known. Out here in the river is a jumble of half caste Hindus, Malays, Japs, Arabs, Lascars and Borneo blood drinkers. A hard boiled, battle scarred mob of fleabitten hoodlums sprawled on a bumpy deck.

Two white men on the roof are more or less surrounded by smudge pipes, bug killers, snake boots, axes and shooting irons. We've got guns enough here to win a war, and all afternoon we've been wasting bullets on crocodiles. If there's one armorplated mugger in this muddy current

there must be five million, so goodbye to the chap who falls overboard.

The old expression "crazy with the heat" sure means something out East. I'm probably nuts right now or else I wouldn't be here. The Calcutta thermometers touched 113 yesterday with the humidity 91. I just lay in bed and gasped. How anybody can move about in this drives me wild. Late in the afternoon I managed to stagger the three blocks to the post-office and there, apparently cool and happy, was Kelly, a beefy doctor I had met in the Khyber Pass.

"Sinclair!" he beamed. "Come along—let's bend an elbow." "Let's what?"

"Bend an elbow—have a drink." "In this weather—and you a doctor? You must be loco."

"Just your evil mind," Kelly said. "I drink quinine tonic—never try it?" "No."

"Then come along, you'll feel top hole."

We found a place behind great hanging screens of shredded bamboo. Water wallahs were squirting iced streams over the screen while punkahs whirred quietly overhead. The quinine tonic was a light yellow and bitter as sin, but it did pep a chap up. I felt semi-human again when Kelly unfolded his plan.

"You never been on a shikari?" he asked. "No, but I've read your book."

"Well, I'm making a quick trip down the Sunderbans to-morrow. Just staying long enough to get one set of stripes. A particular reason. What

about it?" "Deal me in if you've got the rifles."

"Rifles—I got the best thing ever made for tiger. A Canadian rifle, the Ross." "Gosh, Kelly, our soldiers wouldn't use them; said they jammed or something. If a rifle jams on a tiger hunt it's goodbye."

"Never mind about the soldiers; for open tiger shoots they've got no equal." "Open shoots—you mean we're going on foot?"

"Certainly; you're not soft, are you? Thought you were one of those adventurous newspaper Johnnies." "All right, Kelly—it's in the bag but I'm probably crazy at that."

"Anybody's crazy who stays in Calcutta this time of year."

I roamed up to my room to tip the gaunt Gurkha the word that he was laid off. No sense trailing him along. "I come," he grunted. "Tiger kill master. This mating season. No man shoot tiger April. Only October to January. I come, I good shot lethal bullet."

"Good with what?" "Lethal bullet; one big slug in shot gun. Bring down elephant easy. Make bullet myself." He picked up an ink bottle; "this size slug," he said with a wide grin. The Gurkha was hired as backer up.

With the temperature still over 100, Kelly roamed down to dinner in spotless white evening clothes. I looked like a bum in a khaki shirt. What's more I felt like a bum. This weather sure gets me.

"My Gurkha says this is tiger mating season," I said, "what's about it?" "That's right, but what's the odds. A bad tiger is a bad tiger, mate or no mate. You can't make pussy cats of them. Come along." So here we are.

Across the front of this floating bathtub are three alleged staterooms. The Lascar skipper showed us into one and it was the nearest thing to an oven I ever felt on this earth. It almost paralysed me to go inside. Kelly was outwardly cool and cheery as ever. "Got much quinine?" he asked professionally. "About 100 grains." "Load up. We'll park in a lifeboat up top." It's a good thing he said that because at that minute they herded about 400 goats on the forward deck and the smell of those brutes coming back to us on the shimmering heat waves was enough to put me straight over the side.

Somehow or other I fell asleep on deck and, when I woke up, we were away down river on the flat banked bad lands. Palms and bamboo shoots grew right out of the muddy water and huge birds circled slowly overhead. The half-broken paddle wheel bumped unevenly and gave a kind of seasicky lurch to the boat. As we rounded innumerable bends we'd rouse sleeping crocodiles into enough action to slide grunting into the water. Lazy, dirty brutes these.

"Now we'll try the Rosses," Kelly said. They were .280's or 270's which sure didn't seem powerful enough to knock down any tiger but we

snapped in shells and rested the barrels on the ship's gunwales. After about three shots at crocodiles—all misses by a yard or more—I knew I'd underrated the Ross. Boy! the kick from that slug almost gave me a somersault and the spurt of flame that jumped out the barrel was longer than the rifle itself. Talk about high velocity at the muzzle and all that technical dope. This bit of shooting machinery had everything.

Kelly was popping off crocodiles in the water. They sort of break their snouts through gently but never get that vulnerable neck spot aloft. That never troubled Kelly a bit. He'd just sense where it was and let go. Sometimes the mugger would thrash about like a wild bull and stain the muddy stream a frothy pink but usually he just lifted his white belly to the sun and quit. The current down here was so strong the dead crocodiles could almost keep up with us on the float.

I finally got the heft of the Ross and bumped off two crocodiles in a row. It gave me quite a thrill. There were a dozen other rifles to choose from so we were kids again and bammed away about 40 rupees' worth of shells in the afternoon.

"You like that Ross, eh?" Kelly asked. "Sure do."

"Well, try this one." He handed me an elephant gun. Calibre .65. It wasn't very heavy so I took aim at a distant crocodile and let fly. The gun roared like a cannon but somehow I managed to stand upright. Probably a miracle I didn't get

a broken shoulder. It was something like a cross between a bombardment and an eruption. Boom. That was all. I don't know where the shot went; neither does anyone else, but there was no more shooting for the afternoon.

We rigged up some sort of awning over our lifeboat and baked for the rest of the afternoon. At sundown some of the crew trundled a big red gramophone on deck and it sang out the weird cry of the Mohammedan muezzin. "Allah; Allah Akbar, there is but one God . . ."

The sun dropped down into the Ganges a fiery red ball, the goats bleated for food and we went below stairs to an oven-like room for a meal of goat tongue and curry with fried cheese as a chaser.

"More quinine," Kelly ordered. "The more you take the more you need."

I took three double grain tablets with some hot water and went back aloft for an effort at sleep. The jungle, damp and terrible, hemmed us in. It seemed horribly noisy. Squeals and growls and roars. We heard tigers three times and the crocodiles kept making a noise like enormous bull-frogs. Somehow I felt kind of uneasy. Just two white guys and millions of things ready to pounce and kill. The deadly Ganges bubbling and twisting its muddy way to the sea and the battle-scarred riff-raff of all creation in charge of the ship. But my nerves are probably sound at that. Anyway I fell asleep.

Next morning, soon after we woke up, we saw

a fat python, 20 feet long, slide sleepily into the yellow water. Crocodiles hissed and snorted lazily. Top-heavy parrots squawked throatily. They never stopped squawking all day. By afternoon we were in the damp heart of the Bengal jungle in a leaky boat. It was sort of half skiff and half canoe with a sail made of leaves. We were headed up the Ganges delta, where the black panthers and the swimming tigers live.

We had stood over sweating coolies at noon while they came pitter-pattering off the filthy decks of the river craft with enough gear and kit to set up a town. Kelly, the crack shot, had his bath-tub, wash basin, camp chairs, vacuum bottles, tent and everything short of a pool table. I had a borrowed typewriter, a fat Gurkha knife, snake boots, pistol and a dozen tins of peas, corn and lobster.

The coolies set us down on a lump of mud suspiciously like quicksand, and when I hopped out I did sink up to my knees; still that's all in the racket.

Kelly was bossing the job brutally. How he did make those coolies slave. Since we were paying about one cent a trip he'd make them hoist incredible loads to their shoulders and if they didn't act smart about it, he'd smash them across the mouth. If we'd had a piano, Kelly would certainly have made one coolie hoist the thing alone.

Once a scrawny little chap objected to something and Kelly clipped him on the jaw so that

he went out like a light. This is the white man making them take it and like it. I thought it was bullying but never said anything.

Finally we got loaded from the paddle wheeler to the skiff and the coolies stood waist deep in water chanting: "Beater, sahib. Good beater, sahib. Find rango, sahib. Good beater, sahib."

"What's all this about?" I asked Kelly. "Beaters. They run through the jungle chasing tigers out to the guns. We'll need about 40. You get 20 and I'll get 20."

He chattered away in Urdu, now and again swearing like an old-time hack driver and finally announced he'd got the price down to six cents a day each. Imagine chasing tigers through the snake-infested fever belt of Bengal for six cents a day!

"How far do we go?" I asked the blue-eyed Irishman. "About 19 miles up the delta. We'll try to get a small buck on the way up."

"And how are these beater chaps going to get up?" "How should I know? That's their look-out. They'll be on the job."

The upstream jaunt was alive with interest. Alive was right. The stream was about 20 feet wide and most of the time black foliage grew overhead in a natural canopy. That might sound cool and inviting to you, but it was almost roasting. Low-lying, swampy, fever-infested, crawling with snakes. This is sure a spot to give the outsider the jungle jitters. Once we came on a crocodile

tossing the body of a wild boar in the air. He ignored us completely.

"Trying to break the bones," Kelly said. "He probably caught the pig having a drink and whipped him in with his tail. Usually he pulls the carcass underwater and stuffs it into some crack to rot, but he must be hungry. Take a shot."

I was glad of the chance. He was a huge brute and since he faced the shore, I figured I could get two shots in before he'd get away. The Bengali boys, who were paddling, eased the boat around gently and I caught the big killer in the neck with a mushroom bullet. He rolled over and over five or six times, but went sideways and missed the water. Before we had rounded the next bend the vultures were on him and the pig. Good old vultures. They're the best sanitation officers this stinking land ever had.

The stream got more tangled and mixed up than ever, and Kelly had to keep watching a little compass. Then he picked up his rifle, and as we would round the bends he'd keep alert for deer. We saw four or five and he took a shot at one, but missed.

Kelly eased down his rifle then and smoked. "Like turtle soup?" he asked after a bit.

"Sure." He gave some curt order so the boys beached the boat and started netting turtles which were as thick as flies all over the place. They got a dozen terrapin size in no time and we kept them alive in the bottom of the boat.

Twice during the day we heard tigers roar, but they seemed far off on the left. There were goofy looking birds, called secretary birds, fishing along the bank, and monkeys and apes in the trees. There's a difference between monkeys and apes. Apes have no tails, if anybody happens to care.

About five o'clock we came to some ground a little higher than the rest and beached the boat. "This will do. Should be plenty of tiger about here. It's tea time anyhow," Kelly said.

"Tea time—you mean you're going to make tea out of this floating mud?" "Sure, must have tea."

"Well, you can deal me out." "All right, me lad; you'll be sorry, and what about that turtle soup? And what about to-morrow and the next day?"

"Gosh, fellow; I've been to Benares, I couldn't drink Ganges water." "So you couldn't, eh; well, you'll drink it and like it."

We sat on some dry mud while the boys put up the pup tent. They did a good, quick job and, when we went in, they even had a floor of matting down. The floor attracted my attention all of a sudden. My head must be getting foggy or something because I realized I was staring at the floor, but didn't know why. It came to me hazily. The floor was moving! Kelly spotted it at the same moment as I, and shouted, "Snakes—probably a nest of 'em. Rally 'round." Then he started smashing at the ground under the matting with

the butt end of a rifle and cursing the tent boys at the same time. No matter what happened it was always the tent boys' fault and they get a beating for it.

I don't know what kind of snakes these were or whether we killed them or drove them away, but I do know that I drank the tea from the Ganges water and it didn't seem too bad.

My own Gurkha, who had been silently distrustful of Kelly, said he could make turtle soup so we left him to do it and started off to look for tiger tracks and a spot to build the machans. These are little shooting platforms in trees and sometimes you have to stay in them all night, getting punctured and drained by jungle mosquitoes.

We had four guns and two automatics in our little expedition. Kelly and I each carried a Ross, while the gun-bearers had two others for us all ready to go. The bearers were barefooted. We wore heavy boots to the knee. After five minutes it felt as if we were walking in water and after ten minutes we were.

I don't know what I'd expected to see here in the bad lands, but I was disappointed. We had gone two or three miles and were headed straight back again, but hadn't seen a living thing except monkeys and parrots. Then we slushed through a stream and Kelly stopped me. I looked where he was looking and there was a small leopard flat bellied to the ground watching us.

"Take him," Kelly whispered.

I swung up the Ross and let fly, but probably missed by a full yard. The leopard vanished and Kelly laughed. "One of them crack shots, are you?—not twenty-five yards off a leopard and don't even wing him." There wasn't much of an answer. The fact was I'd been spending most of the afternoon keeping an eye cocked aloft for tree snakes.

We got back to camp and found a big fire outside and a smaller cooking blaze right down beside the stream. The turtle soup went swell and we had boiled rice with it. Night came on us with the usual tropical wallop and we remembered the only light we'd brought along was one small flashlight. My Gurkha offered to stand guard the first part of the night, so Kelly and I put the automatics down between our knees and rolled in. I may have slept an hour during the night, but not more. Every time some animal would roar I'd jump a yard. They seemed to surround us with squeals and groans. Once we heard a pair of tigers fighting and snarling like fury; then we could hear something running madly through the jungle. The tigers stopped fighting and we could almost see them watching intently. Suddenly the roars tore the air and we knew then that something had been laid low. This uproar even woke the iron-nerved Kelly. He got up to make sure the outside fire was going and kicked the boy who was on guard. He came back yawning and scratching while the outer jungle noises took up the routine

where they'd left off. I fell asleep then and when I woke up Kelly was packing for the hunt.

Before that the gun-bearers had speared a few fish. They tasted like baked mud but the only alternative were sardines, tinned peas or soda biscuits and I'm not equal to sardines for breakfast. We ate fish and some of those luxurious tropical fruits you read about in books. Bunk, I say! They taste flatter than stale beer. No pep or bite or tang to them. Just flat gooey fruit pulp. I'd give you all the mangoes and papayas that ever grew for a good cantaloupe or a couple of snow apples.

The boys had our mud-caked snake boots all shined up and the pistol holsters were sleek as a seal's hide. We sent a boy ahead and two others followed with the rifles. This is what you call de luxe hunting. You don't even strike a match for yourself.

We scared up three deer about the size of sheep and hundreds of half-tame baboons. They'd sit yapping at us from the trees and once a big daddy baboon chucked a mango at me. I wanted to try a pot shot at him with a pistol but Kelly squawked. He was all for business.

The beaters had gone up on a couple of rafts. I almost got the heeble jeebies when I thought of them in that black undergrowth without shoes on, but Kelly never gave them a thought.

The clearing we spotted had been used by trappers a year before and one of their tiger pits was

still there partly full of water. Four or five trees right there had old bamboo perches set up about twenty-five feet from the mud but we were even denied the muscular activity of shinnying up the side. The gun-bearers put bits of rope on their feet and went aloft first. Then they dropped down a rope for us and heaved. We got up without effort and I felt about as weak and helpless as an invalid with asthma. If this is bold, bad, tiger hunting in the treacherous jungle, give me something rough and tumble, like knocking down clay pipes or tin rabbits.

Kelly was off to the left and partly behind me. I squatted on a ledge wondering where the tiger would come and not getting much of a thrill from the show.

The monotonous "oompa, oompa" like an amateur playing a tuba came from far away. Sleepy chants these. Kelly was all loaded and sighted and ready to go. I expected there would be plenty of roaring and howling before any tiger hove into view, so enjoyed myself watching a mother monkey leap from branch to branch with a little gaffer on her back. He seemed to be all head and squeak.

"Hey you—pay attention," Kelly hissed. "Attention to what?"

"Watch that right side. We're not here for health. If there's tiger here they'll be through in a few minutes. You want to stay here all week?"

"Okay Kelly, but this is about as exciting as tiddly winks."

We sat still as mice then, as the beaters grew louder and nearer. One of them had a drum and it throbbed ceaselessly. I think the drum was to keep up their own courage more than scare tigers. The monkeys realized something was wrong and gradually disappeared. The parrots were still flying around uncertainly like a plane with engine trouble.

Suddenly without a speck of warning the long elephant grass parted and a leopard scooted through in a ripple of bounding feet and flowing muscles. He had a wonderful action. If we'd been absolutely dead set for him we might have got a shot but he went so fast he caught me with my mouth open. Kelly said, "now then, pay attention," so I put the light Ross to my shoulder and drew a bead on a stick. The Ross felt just right. Compact and snug. The beaters were less than half a mile off now and, since they knew where we were, they were screeching now in a frenzy.

Then quietly, so slowly you couldn't have wanted a better shot, a smallish tiger came through the grass. He was going deliberate and slow, his ears back, mouth partly open. He never made a sound. I drew a sight on his front shoulder and knew I had him before I pulled the trigger. It was all too easy. Bam! The flame spurted out like a volcano, Kelly followed me up with two shots in quick succession. The tiger screeched and leaped straight in the air. He just went right up as if on a spring. The first high-pitched screech was

followed by hideous growling roars, and he looked straight up at my perch, slumped sideways like a car on three wheels and came on with his head up and blood drooling from his jaws and oozing from his chest.

He might have had some revengeful idea of climbing the trees to tear me apart, but the mushroom bullets were far too much for him and, before he reached the tree, his growls became feeble rattles and he collapsed. After that he tried twice to get up and almost succeeded the second time, but the shock had gone through his fighting body and it was all over.

Somehow I didn't feel very heroic about it. Something like shooting a clay pigeon. He's driven up, you lie safely in ambush with a powerful hard-sighted rifle and if one man misses the other gets him.

I started to climb down and have a good look, but Kelly shouted, " Stop, you fool. Those beaters aren't here yet. There might be a dozen. Keep up there and pay attention."

I made sure the rifle was ready for action and watched the spot the dead tiger had come from. A couple of big monkeys came through on the run, then a small boar. Kelly took a smack at the pig but missed.

The beaters were screaming in a frenzy now almost on us. I kept watching the opening. Kelly's gun roared out and I shifted my eye quick enough to see a black panther streaking belly flat

for his tree. He had missed badly and missed again with a second shot. I let fly then, but the panther had gone on into the elephant grass and I never touched his hide.

The beaters came up all shiny of skin and out of breath so we climbed down and inspected the kill. It was a smallish male tiger, a bit gaunt with a torn ear, the result of some fight. Kelly skinned him in a hurry and smeared pasty looking preservative all over the inside of the skin.

"Well, young Sinclair," he gloated, "your tiger I guess. Pretty thrilling, what?"

"Gosh, Kelly, is that a big jungle thrill? Why he had no more chance than a man on the gallows."

"So you want to give Mr. Stripes a chance—is that it? Want to be a game sport. All right; tonight we'll go out to the hills. You'll get action all right."

We went back to camp with the hide, ate more turtle soup and tried to sleep in a bath of perspiration. About three, the aimless chatter of crows and baboons in the trees wakened me. I lay under a mosquito net looking at my left foot which was swelled up by mosquito bites and my right foot swelled by bed-bug bites. I couldn't quite decide which was the worst and this interesting bit of entomological research was interrupted by a gray-black lizard falling out of a sausage tree and landing on top of the net. He wasn't quite heavy enough to crash through, so he bounced up and down like an acrobat at a circus

and stuck out his long red tongue at nothing in particular. He was a crawly, scaly brute with a sort of rocky mountain head and quick darting eyes. I lay there, watching to see if he'd change color, but he didn't.

The baboons were chattering monotonously like little boys reciting Jack and Jill while the parakeets raised Cain over some domestic disaster. The poet who wrote that tripe about the silent jungle must have been deaf.

Kelly was snoring energetically and the beaters were sprawled face down like dead men. I pulled on my boots and went after the lizard with a stick. The first wallop I took at him smashed the stick. Then I spotted Kelly's pump-action shotgun and a package of shells marked "lethal". They were like armor-piercing shells used in the army. Soon as you touch something with them they blow that something into a hole.

I loaded five of these and let fly at a baboon. I hit the baboon all right and he became a messy pulp, but the gun also came back and socked me on my hand-made rebuilt nose and it leaked like a hose. You folks with ordinary garden variety noses miss half the fun of life. You should get a hospital model like mine for real nose bleeds.

Kelly was up complaining and growling and fussing about and when he got quieted down we struck off into the jungle looking for spoor. Once we came across a long-haired bear with a sharp white nose like a wolf hound. He stood scorn-

fully sniffing us like a Brahmin priest and I was keen to slip him one, but Kelly wouldn't have it. The bear just stood around sleepily staring at us so we went around him and kept on. He might as well have been somebody's tame cat for all the attention he got.

The gun boys up ahead stopped after a bit and pointed off to a clump of high cactus. They didn't say anything; just pointed. I couldn't see a thing but didn't want to say so. Kelly was puzzled, too, and asked what was up. It turned out to be a python all coiled into a ball with his head tucked down under his own weight. You could see his big middle rising and falling with his steady breathing. He was shiny hided and fat.

"When I say three," Kelly ordered. I switched my rifle for a shotgun loaded with number one; Kelly was using number four. We drew a line on the gently moving brown body and the big brute was dead before he had a chance to uncoil. We had the boys open him with a big Gurkha knife, but he was almost empty. I took the tail end back to camp for a belt, but the white ants found him and there were only a few damp shreds left when I looked next time.

We slushed around in ankle deep water carrying light whippy canes in case of snakes. The boys had the guns and quite suddenly I discovered the boys had vanished. A nice pickle that. Out in the tiger lands with no gun.

"Hey, Kelly!; where's the boys?" He looked

around and gradually turned purple at the back of the neck. A furious he-man this Kelly. Right now he was fighting mad. He bellowed something and the boys came up. Kelly smacked one across the face and probably would have mauled the other one only we happened to spot some flattened elephant grass indicating something had been dragged along the ground. He took his rifle then and we plunged into some low thorn bushes. There were trees there with purple flowers on like thistles. We twisted our way in and found a small buffalo calf dead from a throat gash. Some crows had been pecking at his neck and ants swarmed all over him.

Kelly stood off far enough so he wouldn't leave a smell on the carcass and stood examining the trees. It was five o'clock. "Two hours to go," he said. "You game to stay?"

"Sure—you mean up the tree?" "Yes," he said, "smear this on your face." He gave me some vile smelling oil to keep mosquitoes away and we lapped up more quinine.

It seemed ages and ages up those trees. I kept looking at my watch and every time I thought an hour had passed it was five minutes. Like waiting in the ante-room when you expect the doctor out to say it's a boy.

Kelly didn't seem to mind and I don't know where the boys went. Nothing passed underneath while the sun was gradually sliding over into the west before doing a jungle nose dive. The other

jungle creatures can usually tell when there's a tiger kill around and give it plenty of air. Once a couple of amazing blue moths came fluttering by, and twice inquisitive black vultures plunged down on the upper branches of my tamil tree, but none of the teeming animal life went by.

When the sun did go down it was silent and solitary. I had two flashlights; a small wide-beamed pocket model and a long searchlight type hung to my belt.

By seven o'clock it was black as ebony. I jumped once when a hissing sound came from somewhere nearby, and again when whirring bats came closer and closer to my head, but nothing really happened.

An hour passed like a year and still it was silent. Not a sound except from a distance. The moon came up, but it was a tiny feeble moon giving no light.

By 8.30 I was frantic to move. If you don't believe it's real punishment, try squatting in a tree three and a half hours with mosquitoes and moths and bats buzzing about. I fingered the loaded shotgun nervously and kept snapping the safety catch on and off. From somewhere off in cave-like space came Kelly's muttered curse. I sat silent, determined that if no tiger turned up in a half hour, I'd duck for camp. This was a silly thought because I didn't know the way and tigers can see in the dark.

Then came the lights. Two round green eyes

motionless in the dark. I didn't know what it was, but there was no delay finding out. The tiger yawned and came padding onward. A noisy relaxed sort of yawn. Certainly he wasn't suspicious of us lurking in the trees. I got a bead on the eyes and felt sure I'd miss. A split second before I squeezed the trigger there were growls below, as if in duet, and I realized there were two tigers. April is the mating season and a tough time for hunters. Kelly would have some plan for this, I thought, but what plan?

Before I had a chance to think his gun roared out. There was a spurt of flame as he pulled the trigger, a ball of fire as the shell buried itself in the ground. A full miss. I looked and the eyes were gone; Kelly was swearing, some unseen monkeys were chattering like a flock of sopranos who'd just been robbed. I started to laugh. Well, anyway, I could move now and perhaps get down. I looked toward the ground and there staring straight up at me were two green eyes. It was a tough spot. Not so much that the tiger was coming up for me, but I simply couldn't get a bead on him. He was right underneath. He uncorked the most ferocious ear-splitting howls I ever heard.

A shotgun was out of the question. I unstrapped my pistol and knew that was foolish, too, because I'm not only a rotten shot but the thing is more for alley cats than jungle tigers.

Then came the roar and spurt of Kelly's gun

again. The tiger caught it straight in the middle and whirled around like a cobra. Bam! Kelly had him again and he went down in roaring defiance.

I dropped the shotgun after silence came, and slid down the tree with the pistol ready, but stripes was dead as mutton. We caught him in the light beams and kicked him over a few times. The first bullet had torn a hole in his hide bigger than a cigarette case; still he had fought and snarled in defiance. The second splintered his head.

We had the boys hang the big fellow part way up the tree and started the damp, dangerous trail back to camp. I hadn't pulled a trigger, but it was a fine large evening.

BACK ALLEY CALCUTTA

ANY day, when you stroll down Clive St., Calcutta, the main lane of John Bull's tropical empire, you're liable to grow a bit flabbergasted by the bearded giant who stands outside the National Bank of India, ripping the doors off taxi cabs. That's his job. He gets paid for ripping the doors off taxi cabs and can't be happy at anything else.

It all began a couple of years ago when the six-foot Sikhs with the trick buns on top of their curly heads got a monopoly of the taxi cab business and started hijacking in approved gang style. They'd drive along looking as innocent as a man in black whiskers can look, pick up you or me or Uncle Bim and take us for a nice long drive.

Just as we were admiring the lotus-eyed Bengali beauties—if any—a broad turbaned head would suddenly appear beside the driver and a gaunt arm would reach out to strangle us or poke us in the bread basket with a sword or a bayonet or something.

This is what you'd call a hold-up on the run. You had to hand over your wad as the car sped on or they might run you out to the jungle some place and feed you to the jackals.

So many mysterious strangers kept popping up beside taxi drivers that the chief of police passed a rule that front doors weren't allowed on taxi cabs. That meant passengers could always look and see if there were mysterious strangers up front.

Patiari Key Sinjipoo, a smart lad who sounds like a fraternity, thought it would be a swell idea to hurry around and grab off the job of official door-taker-off, and he did. This being India, nobody could stoop to take off their own doors, so Senor Sinjipoo does a hot business and the number of cruising hijackers has dropped away down.

Another odd thing you're liable to spot around the back alleys of Calcutta is the baby brander. He'll tattoo a pattern on your baby's tummy or chest with a red-hot needle while you wait and par is 55 babies a day. This probably sounds barbarous and fiendish and full of voodoo, but remember these bare-legged Bengalis shave their heads, wear war paint and crimson teeth, drive rings through their noses and sport slave bangles on their legs.

My attention was drawn to the baby brander by the piercing shrieks and screams of the victims, studded occasionally by the yelp of an enraged girl who was undoubtedly from my side of the big pond. I climbed some worn stone steps to find the operating room of this quack full of placid nose-ringed mothers and one white flapper. The mothers were waiting to have their children branded, " to drive away the devils ". The white

girl, a Pennsylvania missionary who looked more like a chorus girl, alternately cried hysterically and raved like a sergeant-major in an effort to have the baby torture stopped.

She picked up a shrieking baby in each arm and appealed to me to do something about them, but I was about as much use as a jelly fish. I never found out whether it was a female monopoly or not, but all the babies in the room were girl babies. The missionary told me that one out of four died from the burns.

Farther along that same back alley, I came across an army of red-robed women digging a great sewer. They were down about ten feet and, by a spiral staircase effect, were hoisting mud aloft in baskets carried on their heads. The only men around were straw bosses fanning themselves and occasionally baying for more pep. These outcast women had beautiful young bodies; well curved and erect as saplings. The carrying of heavy loads on their heads gives them proud carriages that any queen might envy, only they are worn out and old at twenty-three.

Under the trees flanking this great sewer scores of babies were hanging by ropes. The mothers had come to work wearing shirts and a few yards of red cotton wrapped around themselves, and then, with all the privacy of a zoo monkey, they slipped off the shirts, made hammocks of them for little Joie or Esther or Pearl, hung the babies under the trees and sailed in with spades and baskets

to dig a drain our people would scoop out with a squad of steam shovels. When little Joie or Esther or Pearl cried for food or company mother had to drop her sixty-pound load of mud and become maternal, while a greasy hulk of a straw boss sat eyeing her with a watch in his hand. This is India: "Where there ain't no ten commandments and a man can raise a thirst".

Cruelty and suffering are all in the day's work and you only walk ten paces before you bump into both. The day I came back from the Sunderbans proudly lugging two tiger hides which smelled like a neglected incinerator, I sent my luggage up town in a bullock cart and hoofed it myself.

There were a half dozen story tellers, grouped under a big banyan, telling all the boys, who could spare an anna, wild and woolly adventures of five headed man eaters or blood-drinking bogey mans. The boys were fascinated and delighted and so was I. One of the story tellers spoke English only and his dramatic gestures and wheezy intonations made the most absurd yarn sound stimulating. To the amazement of everybody I kicked in my anna and squatted there, native fashion, to hear the tale of the village babe who was carried away and raised by the black panther and came back to rule with the piercing power of his yellow eyes. Just as this story reached its amazing pinnacle somebody yelped in Telugu and the story teller quit his tale, took out a small alcohol lamp and heated two long steel prongs. The things were the length

of a hat pin but twice as thick. He got these red hot and yelled that he was ready.

The man who had interrupted drove up two young buffalo bulls, roped them stoutly about the neck and paid twenty cents to have the story teller drive his red hot points into their eyeballs "to blind them so they will work better".

The buffaloes bellowed and thrashed about in a frenzy, but the operator's aim was sure and steady. He blinded them in less time than it takes to write of it. Then with the suffering animals still thrashing and kicking about in a fury of pain they roped them about the legs, threw them cowboy style and castrated them by a particularly barbarous and cruel method. All this on the public street of the second city in the British Empire.

Even the schools have some of the most brutal bits of punishment outside a torture chamber. Southern Hindus, in some bughouse effort at trying to resemble women, wear their hair long and do it up in pompadours, buns and all the rest. I ambled around a low caste school at Howrah, just across the Hooghly river, and there, for punishment, were five lads fastened to the wall by their own hair. They weren't actually hanging there, but their scalps were jerked back in such a way that if they bent over so much as an inch the hair would pull out by the roots. I never did find out what awful crime these lads committed. They probably breathed in the presence of a Brahmin.

These harum scarum doings are not necessarily

every day sights in Calcutta. You have to stroll up the back alleys and hunt them out.

Calcutta is India's most modernized, most westernized city. She has big parks, gardens, clubhouses, office buildings, stock markets and department stores. Her clubs are among the best run and exclusive on earth. But none of that sort of thing interests the casual prowler who seeks love and romance and adventure. You can get that anywhere, so I decided to duck South to the heat belt of Hyderabad, Secunderabad and Madras.

I did, and Shack town India put on its best crimson loincloth, slaughtered the fatted hen, trotted out the most energetic band ever heard by human ears and read speeches of welcome to your bug bitten globe girdler, as I tried to stop laughing long enough for the mayor to finish his exciting palaver about what a swell guy I was.

This jaunt through the barbarous black belt below Bezwada was not in the original plans, but Calcutta's strangling temperature made it essential I jump and jump far. The mercury climbed far above the 110 mark and I almost drowned in my own perspiration. I waited long enough to grab the week-end mail and then climbed into a so-called southern express for the longest, weariest and dirtiest train ride I ever took in all my life.

For forty-one oven-hot hours I sat or sprawled alone in a black leather furnace clicking southward over the rails. Dust swirled through the windows in great clouds. There was no dining car on this

hideous train, and if you'd spot a roadside food shop selling tinned goods you'd need one tin of bug killer for every tin of sardines or apricots or cheese you bought. That's all I could find; sardines, apricots, cheese and ginger snaps. The ginger snaps came in pound packets, which is more than I can go for one sitting. On a train clicking over the rails at thirty to forty you'd set the biscuits down some place and in five minutes ants would swarm the bundle by the million.

I'd scrape the ants off the edges of the lower biscuits, spray all the furniture with enough bug gas to kill the ant population of the earth, and in less than twenty minutes the car was simply crawling with a new batch. Once the food was gone they disappeared as quickly and mysteriously as they turned up. At one station I found a bottle of Christmas canes and ate these up hungrily. Unluckily I left the crooked end of one cane in my pocket and during the night ants devoured all the cane, all the pocket and most of the coat. Som fon, eh, keeds?

After two days, one night and most of the next night we steamed into Bezwada, hop-off town for Hyderabad, where the richest man in all the world beds down. There, curly headed and bare legged, stood Reg. Bennett; The Rev. R. M. Bennett, B.A., B.Th., to meet me.

Reg. and I stumbled and twisted our way out of the rabbit warren of a station without falling over more than a dozen sleeping Hindus, and found

the Bennett gas buggy surrounded by caravans of bullock carts piled high with straw. Women and kiddies slept under the wagons, indifferent to the threat of snakes, lizards, scorpions and other scaly killers of this vicious land.

Half drugged from hunger, heat and heebie geebies, I piled into the car and we sped inland to where half-clad outcasts live that primitive carefree life you've read about in south-sea love-stories. It was a harum scarum ride and no fooling. Mile after mile of bullock carts jingled and creaked through the night. Miles of them. The drivers were fast asleep.

Sometimes, whole families of professional criminals or gypsies creaked by with nobody directing the white bulls whose eyes gleamed green in the dark. This was all routine stuff to Bennett. He'd swing left or right as the road opened up, he'd stop sometimes or swoop down into the ditch and up again. When we got an open slice of road he'd squeeze down the gas bubble and, for the first time in two days, I'd get a dustless breeze in my face. That part was glorious because the night was fairly cool and the road good. But, soon we'd come to another mile or so of bullock carts as if all India was creaking away to some distant camping ground.

"The most thickly populated part of all India," Bennett said proudly. I could quite believe it. Thick with bugs, babies and bulls. There was a cot on the Bennett verandah for me, so I blew

out the light and rolled in, while bats whirred overhead and jungle noises echoed back from the walls. Soon Bennett came pitter-pattering along the concrete and relit the light.

"Guess you don't know about these things yet," he warned. "Good-night."

"What things?" "Don't sleep without a light," he said.

"Why?" "Snakes," he warned, as his own light cast spooky shadows among the porch pillars.

"What kind you got here—cobras?" "Mostly, but we've got Russell vipers and kraits too."

A swell lullaby that was; cobras, kraits and vipers, the worst three snakes of all in a land where one man dies of snake bite every seven minutes night and day.

The light flickered and Bennett moved about the veranda fastening doors and things. "Any other white men around here?" I asked from the shadow. "Not close; about twenty miles. I'm the only white man for 145 square miles, but there are three white women here. Good-night."

It seemed five minutes later when the sun was in my eyes, the parrots screeching overhead and a day of bughouse excitement had dawned.

The Bennett mission plantation skirts a boarding-school where young India learns to do fractions and parse verbs. From this hub the social life of 150 mud villages is examined the way you'd look at a bug under a microscope.

We ate Indian watermelon, which is sweet as

candy, while velvet brown eyes stared in from open doors and windows and a woman pulled a rope which swung a big fan. The staring eyes were from people who had come to see about sore toes, newborn babies, high taxes, lost mail, dead dogs or any of the other million and one things a missionary is expected to do things about.

Before nine we piled into the gas buggy and bounced down a mud path masquerading as a road. After a few miles through fields, river beds, palm jungles and mud huts we did a loop-the-loop through a dried canal and found bellowing men swooping in from all directions. One of them handed me a bunch of bananas, another gave me some patties made from cane, tobacco and leaves, while the others organized a parade. At a signal they unleashed a clashing bedlam of uproar fit only to drive away an army of voodoo devils, and I managed to shout above the din: "Hey, Bennett, what's the idea—somebody getting married?"

"It's for you," he grinned. "All for you. Big feast, and speeches and loud hosannas, boy. You're the first white man they've seen in months not keen to arrest somebody, collect taxes or kill somebody's sick cow."

I sat back as naked boys and girls came swooping in from all directions, school was let out, flags flown and whoopee broke loose. The Prince of Wales had nothing on me just then.

The band, blaring and bellowing to a tune all its own, twisted this way and that through a mud

village and finally wound up at a church. It was a good church, too, well built and clean. Youngsters in ankle bangles, nose rings and broad grins wrestled and played tag in the dust. Back in a corner were 200 runty little men listening in open-mouthed amazement, while one of their own number sang out a speech of welcome in English.

In between, feeling about as useful as an Empress Eugenie hat and trying not to burst out laughing was me, victim of the oratory. The air of the place was solemn and profound as an inquest. A white man, friend of the missionary, had come to town, and rural India was jolly well going to make the most of it whether he liked it or not.

If you don't believe it, read what they shouted at me and picture this fleabitten carcass trying to look grave and dignified while the orator flung his arms about like a band conductor with the hives. Here we go, hold your hats and don't stand up.

"Respected, honorable and dęar Sinclair Sahib —We, all members of Canada Baptist of Kartour, gather here assemble to make affectionate welcome for your amazing ability in permitting the existence of God and his gospellers. There is gospel in other land but India. You having done. (Clear, isn't it?)

"We are extremely happy to declare that our strength will be increasing in lots of year by memories to you. (In case anybody cares.) We are glad to see your presence and everything. Your appearance makes for much wonder in our village. Because it is good opportunity to see

Sinclair Sahib we come here. Do you come to see our village from Canada? It is so. But we see our village without being oblige to come from any place. (How's that for logic?) Welcome, welcome giving from our happy hearts the clapping of hands. Though you are not sage in age, your works are wonders. Though you are small fellow, not being gigantic, you are brave and sacred and just as valiant in talking as in working. (Somebody's been reading my mail.)

"We are sure to believe the heathens are trying to get jobs and salvation without any shame (or effort). Your dignity of labor, your tolerable of camps, your love of women (what's all this?), your supreme selfishness to all others, your straightforwardness and your deviation of the emancipation of all nations, makes wonders in the world. We like you. We hope we get your presence another time and we thought so. May blessings reach you and give comfort in your life in this world. Your affectionate and respected fellow members."

The orator stopped with his arm in the air, the spectators cheered and clapped and whistled, while the chairman stopped scratching under the armpits long enough to hand me the speech which was all written out and explain to the crowd I would tell them a story. Never have I felt more like a fool. I got up, twirled my hat a few times, wiped my dripping brow, played with my necktie and mumbled some absurd thanks. Then, through interpreters, somebody asked:

"Have you seen the Holy City of the guiding star?" "Yes, I have been there." More shrieks and cheers. The interpreter asked me a few questions, and from that unfolded a sing-song story of modern Jerusalem. The Telugu language is a drowsy monotonous rhythm and that, together with the smell of bodies perspiring on a cow dung floor, almost put me to sleep. To stop this the gang broke into song every fifteen minutes or so. After about three hours of this I wondered if it was an endurance contest. The audience was drifting in and out of doors, shifting around and having a swell time, but I was sitting like a mud goddess on a platform, slowly melting away.

A big lumpy looking man seized one of the singing intervals to sneak in a side door with big pots of green rice and chicken. He tipped the wink to the chief spieler, who ordered all the home towners out of the building. They went reluctantly, and the lumpy man spread a blue rug on the ground, set some plates made of banyan leaves on the rug, and invited us whites to squat. We took off our shoes and sailed in on the native food, which was mighty good. No Indian will dare touch food with any tool or with his left hand. He snatches at it with his right, squeezes it into a ball and downs it in two fractions of a split second. The others, more used to this than me, got about four pounds of rice ahead of me and I committed the horror of horrors once or twice by hoisting a chicken wing with my left hand. People, staring

through doors and windows, held a big pow-wow over this and I knew my name was slush from then on.

We washed down the red hot rice with long beakers of water and ripe, gooey bananas. They go a dozen bananas at a sitting here and think nothing of it. Soon the rug was lifted again and we went back to our places on the throne or whatever the thing was.

Just as if they had never seen me before, the boys started on another long speech of welcome. It took an hour to go through this one.

Somehow I staggered through a reply to this talk, too. Then the preacher thought some explanation ought to be made about that left-handed stab at the rice ball. That took a half hour. It was a funny thing, he said, but over in the great snowy land of Canada people didn't eat with their hands at all. Consequently I wasn't quite up on the tricks. This seemed to inspire a lad to poetry, so he got up and read me a piece. The poetry was all about the awful things that can happen a chap if he drinks beer, and brought gales of cheers and hullabaloo from the women.

More hours went by, and I wondered if the show was going on all week. Luckily, other folks got the same idea, so we managed to break away for a ten-yard run to the car. The women came streaking out after us. "Did the Sinclair Sahib have any sons?"

Sons? Me? Why I got the best sons who ever

lived or breathed. They took this with an oh yeh and asked to see pictures. Luckily I had just got pictures from home, so there, on the running board of the only car in town, I sat down surrounded by Madrasi maidens and made noises like a proud daddy. They admired my lads from every angle. They did the usual maternal cooing and fluttering about, but they refused to even look at my girl's picture. A girl? Poo poo, we got millions of 'em.

The musicians, who had been sleeping it off for six hours, struck up their bilious bellowing again and we were away to see the moonsiff or head man of the village.

WHERE CRIME IS A RELIGION

TEN million South India people proudly announce their occupation as criminals. Stealing is their religion and their job. Not pillage and plunder and vicious raids like the killers of the Khyber go in for, but whining hole-in-the-corner pilferage. If they go three months without stealing something from somebody—preferably a white man—they have to hunt up the priest and tell him why.

To butcher a man is to acquire merit according to these puny little wretches, but unluckily the sinewy arm of the law reaches out and gobbles them in pretty regularly and the hangman is a busy fellow.

In the vanilla and mango belt of the South the criminals come and go in nomadic gypsy herds. Carrying their bundles and babies they stream across country in thousands and like invading locusts they eat almost everything in their path. To try and save the crops, watchmen sit night and day under the mango trees but, being Indians, these chaps often sell out for a rupee or run at the first sign of trouble.

If there is any lower form of human life than

the South Indian criminal then I must be The Lady That's Known as Lou. They live and die in poverty and filth, go through the most ferocious forms of idol worship and teach their kiddies the basest debaucheries. One of their temples is reckoned, by experts on nausea, to be the most revolting in the known world.

I spent idle days strolling around among these people. Every step I took was watched by hundreds of bleary eyes. Every time I stopped to look at anything a dozen people would gather around and silently stare. They would stand off perhaps five paces and look at me as though I was a five-horned toad in a tub.

Some of the women clattered around with solid gold ropes around their necks, thick silver bangles on their ankles and legs, pigeon blood rubies in their ears and noses.

They have neither homes, jobs, incomes or conscience but they have got gold, pots of gold and it's all the thoroughbred article.

The only hospital, for hundreds of square miles, squats on the banks of a muddy ditch and listens night and day to the jubilation of proud papas over the birth of a son or the screeching laments when a patient dies.

Although the hospital is for women only, men clutter the corridors, prowl the wards, cook their rice and mango mush in the compound, peek into operating rooms and shoot craps with stones on the front lawn. It all seems silly until you chase

the idea of privacy out of your head. Privacy here is just a word in a book. Unknown and unpractised. The Indian himself would rather die than be alone and figures that you and I enjoy peeping Toms.

I strolled through the hospital with Reg. Bennett, who is indirectly responsible for it, and learned enough about new born babies to write a thesis. We romped in and out of maternity wards, fondled gaunt little gaffers, talked to proud mothers and generally behaved in the bedside manner. Any day now you'll hear of me as a master mind on obstetrics.

At home, when a new son of the House of Sinclair checks in, I pop around and pay my respects rather distantly and discreetly. Nurses always seem to be fixing me with an accusing eye when I invade a maternity ward, so I tiptoe in and out with an inferiority complex as though I don't belong. Here, papa trots gleefully in and out, brings all his gang, fondles the babe and—if a boy—makes a glorious hullabaloo. Then, so long as his wife is in hospital, he lets the home crops go hang, beds himself down on the front porch, back yard or chicken coop and joins the I-Got-a-New-Baby-Club. Par in membership is about 100 men.

This gives you the idea of a vast hospital with rows of little brown cuddlers neatly set out in white cots. Wrong. The idea is that pa brings Cousin Homerun, Uncle Birdie and Brother Grandslam with him. They sit around, telling each

other what swell fellows they are, all night and all day. Since babies are annual crops until the mother is twenty-eight or so, Dad gets his two weeks off every spring and has a swell time.

Once in a great while a husband has two wives in hospital with new babies at the same time. Then he does put on a show. Real big league whoopee for this fellow and no wonder. If you had two wives having new babies the same day, you'd probably do something exciting too; probably cut your throat.

Since this hospital, built, kept up and staffed by Canadians, lies in the heart of the criminal belt, they have to keep everything under lock and key for fear somebody runs away with the operating table. The equipment, from our point of view, is fifty years behind the times but to the Indians it is a marvel of scientific mystery and they talk about it for generations.

The average weight of these poor little runts at birth is under three pounds and one-pounders are more or less common sights. They never get bottled milk, but feed at the breast until two and a half years old, and it is ordinary for a mother to be feeding two babies at once.

Love and babies and death are all routine stuff to the home town Hindus. They make a bigger row over the death of a monkey than the death of a man and look on marriage as something that happens at a certain age, like having your first shave.

I sat reading "Kim" abaft the Bennett bungalow one day while boarding school girls in brilliant but cheap outfits crossed from their classroom to the mud floor where they sleep, eat and do home work. Two half-clad men came in hesitatingly from the road. They salaamed at the first gate, bowed at the second and almost doubled up when they reached the missionary. Then in a long harangue they explained that a man had come and asked to marry their Kay who was a student at the school, age fifteen. "Will the master manager sahib please let our Kay come home now?"

It was Tuesday: the wedding was set for Thursday but the girl knew nothing whatever about it. She hadn't seen either mother or father for three months. She knew nothing whatever about her future lord and master.

"How old is this husband?" Bennett asked. "In good position at 27 years, my master."

"What position?" "In the railway these three years, my master, and being paid twenty-seven rupees ($8.50) every month. A splendid match, my master."

"He has approached you with dowry?" "Yes, my master. Much preparation is made. The feast is fixed."

"Send for the girl," Bennett ordered. I watched her come slowly under the sausage trees. Shapely and thin with big cracked feet; bare feet of course. She had a fine proud carriage and fine brown eyes. She curtsied and said "good-morning". Then she

approached her father without saying a word. She hadn't seen him for three months but never opened her mouth.

"A man has come. The wedding is fixed," the father blurted in Telugu.

"Oh," the girl said; "you approve?" You could have knocked me down with a crowbar. Imagine asking Pa if he approved before finding out who this Romeo was!

"It is fixed," the father said. "And you may go," Bennett added.

"This man——he who is my husband; what name is he?" "The son of Mullick. He the babu of the railway and is good position."

"Oh," the bride-to-be said. "I pack my things." She went slowly across the quadrangle. You might have expected her to go galloping over to shout "Gosh girls, I'm engaged." But she just walked as in a funeral and returned with her pathetic little cotton bundle.

"Good-bye," she said. "I leave now to go to my mate."

Father and daughter pattered away barefoot in the dust. That's Oriental romance, folks. The real unadulterated article. Just about as romantic as a soggy hot dog.

If you happen to be one of those countless folks, who picture missionaries as frock coated soul savers standing under palm trees with big bibles under their arms, then take a good look at this fellow Reg. Bennett and scrap all those ideas.

He looks after a half million or more people and really looks after them. He holds court and fines roughnecks and bad actors, whether they're mongrel humans or high born hooper doopers. Sometimes he's both pleader and judge and jury. He marries folks, buries them, pleads with them, bawls them out, rules them. He covers hundreds of weary miles over impossible buffalo trails every week, cures the sick, comforts the dying, feeds the starved. His word is law in 150 villages and he is soundly hated by high caste, landlords and money-lenders, who see in him an enemy of their predatory grafts, and thirst for his blood.

He takes more chances in the snake and lizard belt than the most ballyhooed adventurer, because he has to sleep and eat and drink in the wide sun-drenched plains where he has his own two arms and nothing else to defend himself with. If malaria, dysentery, Bengal rot or other tropical horrors strike him down, while out in the pagan black belt, he has to fight death alone until he reaches home, where his wife, formerly Ila Fraser, a medical graduate of the University of Toronto, will nurse him to health.

He worked his way through college as a sailor and is a tough lad to put the wind up. One day, for instance, we started off across an alleged road, for an outcast village full of fleabitten animals bearing only slight resemblance to human beings.

"Better carry a stick," he said as we started. There were poisonous lizards around the bungalow,

but they were timid slinkers ready to get out of our way. Still, you might step on one, and a stick is handy.

We stalked through the stubble of dried up rice fields. There were women there threshing with long clubs and others walking up and down a beam to draw water out of a deep well. They were regular tight rope walkers with fat, sure feet.

A caravan of creaking bullock carts loaded with rice jingled over the path and we stepped aside to let them pass. Suddenly I got a chill at the back of my head and jumped aside. There was a snake there coiled in the path. Bennett, seeing me spring, slashed out straight and sure. As it turned out, the snake was already dead by the teeth of a mongoose, but it was a krait, the most deadly thing that ever lived. Quicker to kill than a tiger or a rogue elephant. Just one dart and you're a blue, stiffening form.

Luckily for the people the mongoose here interbreeds with the rat. The result is a half-breed, sure enough with his lightning neck to kill the slow, fat boas and pythons but, unlike the true mongoose, no match for the cobra or the viper who pounce with trip-hammer fury.

All over India boys and old men trot around with flat baskets of cobras slung on a pole, and mongooses on strings the way you'd lead a bull pup—or is yours a spitz? For a bit of sucker money they'll set the mongoose going after some cheap grass snake and you see a ball of infuriated

fur rip the head of the snake to quivering ribbons in seventy-five seconds flat. But try and get the boy to set his mongoose against a cobra. Not a hope, because cobras are too difficult to replace and the mongoose always wins. Here, in the belt of the half-breeds, you'll see the cobra in action whenever you want to kick in with a rupee. But he faces the half-breed mongoose and stiffens him out like a starched shirt with one hammer-like pounce. Half-breed mongooses are cheap and easy to catch, like grass snakes. That has nothing to do with Bennett, but we're just ambling through this rice field now and every anecdote is grist to the mill.

As we entered this village there was a pond there alive with frogs. Most of them were nimble little fellows, but a few were monstrous horned things with arrogant unblinking eyes. They wallowed in the mud and refused to move on when we tossed mud at them.

The village itself is a namby-pamby collection of pig pens. Mud and straw, straw and mud. If you want to get swanky and show off, you build your house with cow manure. In the entire village of 290 huts there is less furniture than you can pile into a canoe. One man has a bookcase that he found on the road; three merchants, whose stock is piles of dried peas, beans and rice, have low teakwood chairs. The folks just sit, sleep and work on the mud. They are born on the mud and die on the mud. Their possessions are two

loincloths, one pugaree or turban and five cooking pots.

The temple is grown over with weeds and grass, the school has no walls and the burning ghat lacks sufficient wood to destroy a body fully, so the dogs, rabid and fleabitten, manage to finish off that chore. That's the sort of village Bennett works in every day. Filthy beyond imagination; peopled with disease-racked animals less intelligent than a horse. They know nothing, see nothing, do nothing.

"What on earth do you eat when you land into a town like this?" I asked. "Rice and curry," Bennett grinned. "Every day?" "Sure, three times a day." "Ever been attacked by snakes?" "Not here, but in the compound at home a big viper got nasty."

"You killed him?" "Oh, sure, I saved the skin."

"And how often do you get leave home to Canada?" "Once every seven years."

Seven years! Suffering sardines.

"And what salary? Is that getting too personal?" "Certainly not; it's published in all the mission books: $1,300 a year."

"You get about $27 a week for seven years to live in a penal colony like this?" "Sure, it's great work too, and I like it."

He and his breed, whether Catholic or Protestant, are all unsung heroes. They work like coolies, suffer perils of crawly death and do it

with their heads high, their colors flashing in the breeze. They get neither thanks nor riches nor comfort, but they win admiring respect.

From Vuryuur, in the vanilla belt, I marched on Madras; John Bull's oldest Indian city, but a jinx or hoodoo chased me most of the way. To start with, the train was hours late and I had to lay around among bundles and babies and restless goats for most of a velvet black night. Not long before dawn, the train rolled in, I found an empty compartment and had scarcely got asleep when the red train stopped in a burning village and the glow from dancing flames cast spooky shadows inside the car.

People were baying like wrestling fans outside the window, so I got up to see what all the fuss was about. As I opened the door, the train lurched ahead, slammed the heavy steel shut again and crushed my finger into a bleeding mess. I thought it was farewell finger and jerked the emergency chain. The train slid to a stop while an angry half-breed guard came back to see what was what.

"Broken?" he asked, when I showed the finger. "Guess so—you got a first aid kit?" He didn't know, but went to find out. Ten minutes later, he handed me a tin holding a rusty knife, some moth-eaten bandages and two empty phials. The box had evidently been running up and down India for 20 years, just waiting for somebody to smash a finger.

"I'll have a doctor at the second next station," the guard said. When we got there, a fat Indian waddled into the car, presented his card and his salaams, looked at the now throbbing finger and brought out a long yellow form having something to do with "non-responsibility accidents on state-owned railways".

He filled in dates and times and names, and then demanded, "What sex are you?" "What sex—well, do I look like a chorus girl?" He took this answer to mean male and solemnly wrote it down.

"What was your mother's maiden name?" "Listen, doctor, I've got a sore hand. It's throbbing and needs attention right now. Will you fix up the finger and ask this stuff afterwards? I tell you this thing hurts. It's smashed."

Without even looking up he droned out his question again: "What was your mother's maiden name?" Well, what can you do? This is the bureaucracy of a Bengal babu. I could have been suffering cobra bite, with every second putting me nearer the burning ghat, and he'd probably still demand absurd answers. He droned on in a series of numbered questions and then capped it all by asking, "What sex was your father?" I thought that one must have been a gag, and unleashed a few imported remarks seldom heard by Madrasi medical men, but it was all greeted with the same bland indifference and finally my hand was bathed

in scalding iodine, done up in splints and put in a sling.

"Fifteen rupees" ($4.50) the doctor demanded, "and sign this."

In Madras the rickshaw walla dropped me at a low, flat bungalow back of a wind-swept banana grove. The finger still throbbed, but I took off my shoes and tie and sprawled on a hard hay mattress, inviting sleep. I didn't wake until some women, who had been doing field work nearby, set up a giggling chatter at the back door, as they lined up for a chance to sit under a water tap long enough to bathe mud and perspiration from their shiny bronze bodies. Fine, stalwart coolie women, these, well curved and graceful, but worn out at 23.

I reached out a drowsy hand for my shoe and slipped it on mechanically. I reached out the splint-bound left hand for the other shoe, tapped it gently to see if there were scorpions inside—a routine Indian precaution—but never looked down to see if there were or not. There never had been, and I was still half asleep. I slipped the shoe on and then bent down to lace it up. Ping! The poison tail of a black scorpion whipped over his lobster-like head and caught me square on the knuckle. For one paralysing second the whole arm went stiff and numb. It was harder at that one second than a steel bar. I watched the fiendish bit of black death back away from me with his lobster claws ready, his stinger all set. Then I

ground him to a pulp under my heel and hopped for a hospital.

I remembered that we'd passed one on the way to the bungalow. It was the name struck me, "The Lady Willingdon Nursing Home". My hand began to swell visibly. It was only 50 yards to the hospital, but when I got there the finger was almost as big as my wrist. There were six or seven people lined up to see the doctor, but I barged right in. There was a white nurse sitting there. She didn't seem too friendly.

"Black scorpion," I said, holding out the hand. She got up without saying a word and slit the finger end with a lancet. A pink fluid spurted out. It was lumpy like sour milk. There was no silly business of questions here, but all sorts of quick action, and in the middle of it I fainted like a sissy. They kept me there overnight, and a black man came around with one of those forms. A man in India couldn't fall dead without filling out a form.

This one demanded that I detail all my visible property in India and its location, give the address of my nearest relative and the administrators of my estate. Just a pleasant little paper. However, we're all set now, with the trickiest color scheme you're likely to spot anywhere. The broken finger is blacker than ebony. The one punctured by the stinging shoe scorpion is a purplish pink to the first knuckle joint and from there up a perfectly gorgeous green.

Now if I happen to get a toothache or an ingrown toenail, I'll know just what to do about it. Fill in triplicate form 47xb, " relating to the vitamin value of currants in Chelsea buns ".

LAUGHING LADIES

AND here we go swishing across the Bay of Bengal to the bam bam balmy shores of Burma. We're taking the road to Mandalay; to the land of golden pagodas and pigeon blood rubies.

Madras, headquarters of untouchables and hop off place for the land of the lacquer ladies, is one of those stuffy towns you can pass up and forget forever. No more romantic or exciting than a cold sausage. Luckily, I found this out ten hours before the weekly steamer pushed off for Rangoon and luckily, there was room for one more passenger.

Deciding things with recklessness and rush is my idea of a good time, so I grabbed that berth. The bank roll got a jolt there, when I had to buy the Gurkha a ticket back to his Nepalese hills, five days away.

We were up with the dawn to find the steamer still anchored at sea and the North bound train puffing impatiently at a siding. If Man Friday was to see me safely aboard the 4,000-ton coolie-carrier he'd miss his train and have to hang around 24 hours. He thought even less than I did of

Madras and I could see the homesick look in his eyes. It was easy to read his thoughts.

"Must be a girl up there among the snows," I hinted. "Many girl," he grinned.

"You're a sort of expert on girls, eh?" He grinned. "All right; here's your ticket and money. A fortune for you."

"But master, luggage?" "That's all right. You hop your train. Have a good time." He turned away and was gone. After six roving weeks I liked this bloodthirsty fighting man from the hills.

He'd rob and plunder any living man except his master. That's his code of behavior and he certainly did keep a motherly watch over me. I squatted on my bed roll while beefy English police stood guard over the sheds full of deck passengers and spanked them with bamboo whips when they went prowling around where they didn't belong.

I'd just nosed into a book when the Gurkha came back still grinning down from his six foot three. He was carrying his shining big double-edged knife. A he-man blade this if ever one was made.

"You good master," he announced. "I give kukri." He put the razor-like edge reverently in my lap and put out his hand. We were man to man now. He was giving me his most prized possession in the world and he was shaking hands. I had admired the great bear killer often and here it was, shining and sharp. He clutched my hand,

lifted his long legs into a rickshaw and trotted away to the iron hills of Nepal.

Hours later, we were aboard. A puny little tub this. Built for freight and rice harvesters of whom 667 are sprawled half naked around the decks eating fabulous loads of red bananas, debating the merits of Gandhi and praying night and day forgiveness from the awful sin of crossing water.

Eleven white men and three women on board. The worst dressed 11 men who ever slung a razor. A suit in this heat looks like a dish rag after five minutes anyhow, so we wear cotton shorts and sleeveless, neckless shirts which wilt and drip.

Outside on the wharves naked kiddies wrestle and roll and shout while their mothers go up and down like sentries pleading for money. Usually they spank their stomachs to make a hollow sound and show how hungry they are.

Two boys, without sign of an arm, waddle like top heavy ducks, while an old man with a billy goat beard cries over their affliction. The boys are deaf, dumb and armless.

The police, busily spanking natives who have paid their fare, pay no attention to these invading horrors. A flock of orange-colored goats are carried, bellowing, up the rear gangway; a horse gets the wind up as they hoist him over the front. A long sporty car swings on deck, the mail comes down under armed guard. The pilot, looking like an Arab, comes aboard and sips a mug of coffee.

Barefooted Hindu servants patter around haul-

ing water, the ship's doctor, black as coal, says put out your tongue and we put it out.

All night, Mohammedan deck passengers chant the Koran in quivering effeminate voices. The Hindus, off in another part of the ship, get beastly sick in the roll. We white men crowd into the pint size smoke room and the walls echo to tales of adventure in the distant outposts of the world. Here is a professional lion tamer, battle-scarred and hairy. An Australian mining engineer, keen to buy champagne for the house.

"Why, Australia; your birthday or something?" "Birthday? Hell's bells, man, I'm about to be married."

It's one of those deep sea love affairs. He met her on the ship going home to Australia. Now he comes back for three years in the jungle and then a trip up the centre aisle. Three years is no time out here. Here's a professional singer, bull-throated and deep-chested; a salesman pepped up because business has picked up, two army officers and a man who sits around in his pajamas wearing a monocle. He's the mysterious stranger; there's always at least one.

They call me "Canada" and ask about the wolves and snows and howling blizzards. So three days and nights pass in argument, jokes and very bad bridge. Then our first glimpse of Burma. A great golden spire pointing skyward. The Shwe Dagon Pagoda flashing in the noon sun. Sampans come out to meet us and there, sure

enough, are Burmese maidens smoking thumping big cigars. And what women! Beautiful!

Here we are threading our way through the old flotilla as mud pours down the Irrawaddy. Rah, rah for Rangoon where there are no holy heifers and a man can chew a steak.

The men wear gorgeous skirts and perfume. They carry parasols, mind babies and plunk guitars as the night breeze sings in the palm trees.

The women smoke thumping big cigars like Roman candles, pile their ebony black hair up in pagodas, steeples and other architectural designs. They drive taxis, parade the boulevards without veils and flirt with the sahibs up from Singapore.

Across in peninsular India you see none but outcast women or shuffling ghost-like figures under the purdah veils. Here the tawny beauties play the old game of drop the eyelash. Here at last is the east of glamor and beauty and romantic excitement. Clean and fresh and stimulating. Somehow Rangoon makes me think of amor and adventure and trysts in the mango grove.

Our 4,000-ton goat carrier wound slowly, noisily, up through a harbor filled with ships. Ships to all the world like taxis lined outside the ball park. Sampans scooted this way and that, with oarsmen in brilliant crimsons, blues, greens and yellows, pushing instead of pulling on their sweeps.

Golden pagodas hung with colored lights pointed their spires into the sun. A group of red-turbaned Madrasis came singing down the river with the

pilot in spotless white. We nosed ashore among buoys spread out like fabulous mushrooms. Rickshaw wallas bellowed and pleaded for fares. The deck passengers, over for the rice harvest, were herded into big sheds like army mules. Doctors had us stick out our tongues. A gun boomed. An American liner nosed outwards bound for Honolulu. A ship of the old flotilla churned up the mud; "Prome, Mandalay, Maymu," the sign said. Mandalay! Why, sure: right around the corner.

Indian coolies, with big pink pugrees on their heads, fought with Hankow coolies for a chance at the luggage. The Chinese fellows won hands down. They wore vast steeple hats and slung rake handles over their shoulders. They'd hang a trunk from a rope at each end of the rake handle and run through the heat-drenched town with the pair. Run, mind you. Run with a load that you or you or you couldn't lift.

I grabbed a gold and purple rickshaw and the black man started away like a race horse. Traffic was heavy and he kept looking backwards to see that nothing sideswiped us into eternity. The go-cart was high, with a lean-back seat. It made me sit up like I was the Supreme Grand Moghul of something or other. Sometimes there were a dozen rickshaws abreast, all going at full gallop.

We rolled up among the high coco-nut palms. There was a mother and her young under one tree. Ma was puffing a cheroot that looked like a fire-

cracker just ready to go off. The young girls were sucking away at stogies and the mere shavers of the clan had skinny cigars like pencils. The youngest of them all, a slant-eyed girl with a big blue bow tied at her back, didn't have a cigar at all, so the mother handed her torpedo over for a few casual drags.

I laughed from the heels up, and the coolie man thought I had shouted stop. That seemed like a good enough idea anyhow, so I got out and handed him a dime. I never looked at the poor sweating fellow, but almost jumped when he said in faultless English: "But, please, sir, this is not enough."

"Where did you learn English?" "In the school at Madras, sir, and the real price is ten annas (20 cents), but if you could spare gratuity . . ."

I gave him a rupee. Any rickshaw boy who speaks that kind of English deserves a better fate. I hadn't found a hotel or done anything about my luggage, but Rangoon fascinated me, so I struck off to see what was what. There was a broad tree-lined avenue up to the Sule (Soolay) Pagoda, so I headed that way. Beautiful white buildings lined the avenues. Flunkeys done up like London majordomos guarded huge bronze doors.

There were smart shops like Fifth Ave. or Regent St. White-garbed police swung traffic semaphores under big umbrellas. Slant-eyed men clumped past on wooden shoes. They wore white sport shirts and wide billowing skirts in the most gorgeous colors of the rainbow. With crimson

skirts they'd have a green or purple turban. The effect was more colorful than an extravaganza, more exciting than Chu Chin Chow.

Rickshaw boys rallied around me, so I climbed into another one and he ran me through this city of surprises. Big modern theatres, amazing restaurants, Oriental bazaars. Chinamen by the tens of thousands dressed as they dress in Pekin. I kept wondering what it was about these Chinese so different from ours at home. Then I saw it was the children. Hundreds of chirpy little shavers with their heads as hairless as eggs. I thought they were swell kids. I always did like Chinese. They're industrious and square-shooters all the way. It's the Chinese who have lifted Rangoon from the filth of India to the beauty that is Burma.

Restaurants were set out in the broad roads and on the sidewalks. Compared with the two-foot sidewalks of India, these were 30 feet wide, and clean swept. All the sidewalk restaurants were Chinese and the food smelled like more. They had ducks and big slabs of pork and whole barrels full of succulent tropical fruits. The smell was too tantalizing to me, so I paid off the rickshaw and took a chance on chopsticks. They brought me half a skinned duck done to a golden brown. Trouble was I drew the front half and the duck had a long, skinny neck. The head was still on him, but there was a dog waiting for that.

I couldn't manage the chopsticks, so sailed in

with my fingers, Indian fashion. I was sitting on a high bench, my legs dangling short of the ground, like a wide-eyed boy having his picture taken. The Chinese on both sides of me drew their feet up under them and balanced perilously. When I'd pretty well demolished the half duck the fat woman who waited on table brought me the skin, fried in butter. That was the real delicacy of this adventure. The stuff looked like thin straggly liver, but, after sixteen weeks of India, I'm game for anything short of a horse shoe. I sailed in on this fried duck skin, and you can take it from a lad who knows, it's food for the gods.

There were string beans in bowls, rice in big plates, coco-nut milk in gourds, and then the real surprise, mango steen. Oh, boy; it's elixir! A succulent tang I've never tasted before. The thing is purple, about the size of an apple. You break it and find a whitish yellow ball inside. Scoop that out with your fingers, let it melt in your mouth. Swell!

The capital of Burma, gateway to the tea and teakwood uplands where the tiger and the hamadryad are twin monarchs, is called Rangoon, but it should be Glasgow or Edinburgh or Inverness.

Burmese built it, Chinese own it, Japanese covet it, Malays and Madrasis populate it, and Scotsmen rule it. Shops, directories, banks and income tax rolls swarm with McLeods and McTavishes, with Frasers and Sinclairs and men of the Clan Campbell, but you'll hunt ten years without

finding a Gandhi, a Duleepsinjhi or a Naidu Shan.

Probably in the good old days when Scotsmen wore the kilt some hairy chieftain got fed up with his hills and decided to get away from it all. He spied out the world to find some other land where men wore skirts and this is it. So now you hear the defiant screams of the pipes instead of the cobra charmer's devil tube and even the lacquer ladies with the liquid brown eyes sport the plaid of Argyll.

The foot-loose wanderer, who strolls off the main lane on this road to Mandalay, finds himself in a new world altogether. Glamor and charm and romance are all here. The lazy, smelly, home-sick spell of the east; yet the abbot of the Shway Dagon Pagoda lives at 49 East 51st St.

Suffering sarsaparilla, imagine it. In a land of elephant hunts, cinnamon trees, mango groves, golden temples, rice plantations, pigeon blood rubies, peacock punkas, sacred dancers and licorice colored Lascars, the abbot of Shway Dagon lives on 51st St. There is no justice. There simply can't be. Why don't they call it Golden Temple Rd., Cinnamon Lane, Ivory Blvd., Street of the Flying Fishes? Anything except 51st St. The world cries out loud for romance. If it didn't I'd be writing police court news at home. Help, men! Throw me a rope. This town has got me down.

I ambled, fascinated and alone, through this

home of the human truck horses. The place bustles and thrives. Beautiful big buildings are going up. Steel for these is landed from countless ships which pass in the ebony black night and men of inhuman strength load the beams on hand trucks and push them to the building site. Here a crane hooks on to them and other men turn the crank to hoist the steel aloft. All hand work and your heart almost bleeds for the heaving, straining, grunting men who push and groan with their load of steel. But life is cheap and short. If a man isn't heaving steel bars around he's probably galloping around pulling some white-hided molly-coddle like you and me in a rickshaw.

Drifting down into the Hindu quarter with its filth and squalor, I came across a yogi calmly and deliberately coiling his own entrails. That's just one of the yogi tricks. His code is that man is a soul. His body doesn't count. It is to serve him with the least possible trouble. He can drink acids, eat razor blades, throttle snakes, go without food or drink and—You don't believe it, eh? Then go to your nearest library and read about Yogi.

As I stood, horrified yet unable to drag myself away from this holy man, a Burmese funeral went by in a clamor of whoopee and rejoicing. Death, to these delightful people, is a release from sordid monotony to a place of beauty so, instead of crying and sympathizing, they feast and sing and have a big time. The funeral procession was 65 rickshaws long with two Burmese in each rickshaw.

Madrasis or Chetties from Bombay ran like half-milers with the rickshaws and the women, all of whom were carrying big bundles of red asters, sang and clapped.

I hopped into one of those high-wheeled go-carts and asked the horse to join the big parade, but he wouldn't do it. "Curse on Hindu man if go Buddhist ghat." "It's not a ghat, man—besides what about those men pulling the parade?"

"No can do, sahib. Holy men cast spell. Spell kill Hindu man." I argued a bit, but it was useless so I got out again and sat like the other Buddhists contemplating my navel. Judging by the way these people sit studying their navels all day it must be full of vast perplexities like the Einstein theory or else they are acquiring merit or, as you've guessed already, it's a way to pass the time.

As I sat there meditating under a big grin, Burma passed on the hoof. Many layered like a wedding cake. The shrines which surround the hundred and one pagodas are piled layer on layer of lacquered teak. The women pile their shiny black hair layer on layer until it's half the size of themselves and the men wear either a small turban like a pirate's bandana or from two to five brown fedoras sewed together to keep out the last trace of sun or monsoon rain. Rickshaws rattled up and down the hot pavements. Two elephants, all done up like circus dancers, clumped past and behind them followed a hawker of loongis.

A loongi is a skirt for men—and what a skirt! It's 72 inches around the waist and if one has been made less gaudy than crimson and gold, purple and green or yellow and black it must have been exported to Siam. The hawker spied me as a likely prospect and sailed into his sales talk. All silk and two yards wide. Guaranteed not to rip, tear, fade or show the dust.

"No buttons, sahib, you throw pants away. Wear loongi like Burma boy. Much cool. Much breeze up leg. No sweat, sahib. Much cheap. All silk. Won't rip, tear or fade in the sun."

He jumped in and out of the thing like a stage poodle going through the fiery hoop, whipped it around his middle and did all sorts of tricks. I tried it on the streets of Rangoon while one or two white men lifted their eyebrows. As a loongi wrapper I'm a good plumber. The fool thing wouldn't stay up no matter how I tried. Then suddenly, like learning to balance a bicycle, I got the hang of the thing. What's worse I bought it, scuttled back to the hotel and put it on. The East gets us all sooner or later. Now for a nice purple turban, then I'll rope on my Gurkha Kukri and make noises like a musical comedy villain. Boy! Bring my bow and arrow.

SEASIDE HONKY TONK

SAILORS from a thousand distant ports swear Rangoon is the spiciest night spot east of Suez; and the sailors are right.

Honky tonks spot the main stem like fleas on a Hindu pooch and they're almost as active. Cymbals clash, throb and roar in the Chinese theatres. Native Burmese put on extravaganzas called a "pwe" (pway) which is a bit of adagio dancing, wrestling, tight-rope walking and grand opera thrown into one. Waterfront dance halls sport partners of every color, race and breed known to men and cracked skulls are just part of the menu.

Through all this, like a shuttle on a loom, the golden robed, bald-headed Buddhist monks cross and recross like silent but inquiring ghosts. Together with a bull-throated Australian, whose idea of a good time was to battle from three to eight colored men at the same time, I made the round of opium dens, perfumed roof gardens and back alley cha cha joints.

We picked up our thread of destiny abaft the Soolay pagoda, about sundown where roly poly Burmese women were making fat black cheroots. The Burmese beauties are usually slim, wiry women

with slanty liquid eyes, a clear tawny skin and flat feet which go slap slap along the pavement. The fat ones roll the best cigars. They smoke them, make them, gossip and laugh, mind babies and flirt with the spectators all at the same time. They wear mounds of silky black hair, little jackets of spotless white muslin drawn tight around their throats and long gawdy skirts tight around their legs. The equator is bare. They scoop up a handful of black tobacco strands, roll it by hand and then fit it into the curve of their hips to shape up and finish into a cigar. The natural perspiration gives the necessary moisture for shaping the cheroot and that's one reason why I stick to cigarettes.

To stand there and look at them rolling away you'd think all the trained fleas in the world had escaped and were being energetically hunted down. As the piles grew, girls came along and tied them up with tricky pink ribbons. Made me think the Burmese cigar industry was one of those stunts for women only; fat mamas make them, thin girls pack them and the whole female population smokes them one after another. A fair average price is two for a cent, but the ones perfumed with vanilla come higher.

We strolled into the pagoda pickling vaults where dead abbots lay in big vats of honey waiting some celebration day. Eleven big league monks were there in pot bellied stone jars. Some of them have been dead ten years. The honey keeps

them fresh even in Burmese heat. When an eclipse or light festival or other cause for whoopee comes along they bring out one of the sticky corpses, pile him beneath garlands of hibiscus and narcissus and crimson creepers, place him at the head of a parade and carry him to a big burning ghat where he goes up in flame. Each of the jars was labelled with the name of the dead abbot. Names like U Ba Oom, Hi lu Am, Ip Sip Op. A cross between Chinese and the baboon language—if any.

We had to take our shoes and socks off in this pagoda and when we came out my shoes were gone. I stood there making a row like a man in distress, but the shoes were still gone. In their place were some sandals, with a knotted thong to go between the big toe and the others, so I slipped these on and refused to tip the temple girl who sang me a song and gave me a gorgeous colored fan. She uncorked a flow of language worthy of a sailor's parrot.

We ambled up through the Chinese food bazaars then and smelled all the exciting gastronomical odors of the east. The Chinese certainly cook entertaining things for people who are not white people. We decided to have a regular Ling Poo meal and it was a doozer. I downed everything except the bearded green eggs.

The noodles and fat pork were easy to take. The beef and beans were great and the bird nest soup a bit sticky. But when they brought in those tiny

eggs my innards told me to go easy. We opened one each and peeked inside like boys staring under the circus tent. There wasn't any white part to the egg at all. Just a round fuzzy green thing. The smell was drowned out by all the other smells so we took an experimental sip and called that enough. Them as like 'em can eat 'em.

When I got back to the hotel about two, a tall Sikh with dangling long arms was sleeping at my door. I woke him and he sprang up, grinning. "Master leave India, no?" "Yes, leave next week."

"Master got permit leave India?" "No, no permit."

"Must have permit. I bring him." He handed me an important looking sealed document wherein the Portmaster of Rangoon authorized me to leave anytime in the next six months. There was also a note from Cook's saying I owed them two rupees.

The Sikh grinned. "I go now—master have permit." "But how long have you been waiting here? Cook's close at five." "Yes, master. I come at four. I go now." He'd been squatting there waiting for me for ten hours. So grows the east. Orders is orders.

BLACK PANTHER; BROWN SNAKE

LOAFING in the dappled shade of a breeze kissed palm tree in the fascinating land of Burma sounds romantic and exciting and all that. If a chap does it long enough and often enough he begins to lose hold of boyhood ideas of things as they are and a big black "bunk" begins to blot them out one by one.

For instance, "wearing a tight hat makes men bald." Bunk! Here in Burma men wear turbans bound to their heads tighter than bandages. They wear them day and night, inside and out, winter and summer, but if you can show me a bald Hindu I'll introduce you to a pink horse. There aint no such animile. There never was.

"The east with its puny standard of living is a cheap country to live in." Utter rot! India is one of the most expensive countries in the world. Clothes, such as they are, come low. Bazaar shoes, about .50 per cent. paper, are about $2.50 and rice is cheap. But a filthy flea-bitten movie is $1.25, a European meal will average $1.60, gasolene is 60 cents a gallon, tooth paste 40 cents, soap 30, beer 35 cents a bottle, soda pop 20 cents. Anything imported, whether a tin of peas or a

bottle of shaving lotion is double the price we pay. A motor car costs almost as much as a house.

"Bachelors, with their many clubs, lead a gay and festive life." Tripe! They are the loneliest men on earth. Men without women afraid to face their own thoughts.

We sat two nights ago on the breeze-cooled verandah of a smart club. About 125 men in full dress. A jazz band played merry tunes, but nobody danced because there were no partners. Native servants, quiet and picturesque, pattered bare-foot from table to table with ice-tinkling drinks. Many drinks.

Out in harbor a black liner pointed her snout for home. Home! Men watched her slip silently away. The peppery music and the drink kept up their spirits. Besides they had sat there every Friday night for months or years and watched the weekly steamer nose outward for home. This was nothing new.

Pals and club buddies were in that ship. Lucky devils. Somebody is always able to get home. She threw up a cloud of smoke and grew smaller down the muddy Irrawaddy. Then a new guest arrived. A fat roly poly man who looked like Santa Claus and was almost as popular.

"Well, well, Old Bill himself," the sahibs in stuffed shirts shouted. "We want Bill. We want a song." The jazz stopped. The pianist sat expectant, but Bill didn't come forward to

sing. He looked glum and a bit frightened. The crowd politely clamored for entertainment, so Bill got up and said, "All right, you chaps. Old Bill will sing. But it won't be the same Old Bill. The doctor's just been and read my death warrant. Cancer, he says, and I'm for it. But I'll sing a couple of old favorites."

The verandah was suddenly hushed. Men twitched just a bit. Lonely men without women. Then Bill sang "Tommy Lad," the ballad of a father to his boy just learning to walk, and handkerchiefs appeared, eyes were brushed sheepishly. Men smoked and listened and thought of the places they wanted to be and the Tommy lads they'd never father. Then Bill sang "Danny Boy" as the homebound ship slipped out of sight and the handkerchiefs became very busy.

Slaves to trade, these chaps just let go for a minute and were no longer ambassadors of commerce in full dress clothes. They were little fellows alone in the dark, feeling around for something comforting to cling to. The ship vanished, guests pulled themselves together, the party broke up, and the sahibs went home to forget. For me, just another story. For the residents, one more lonely night beneath the Southern Cross. Gay and festive? Sure; just as natural as seeing a shark walk the streets on his fins.

"Meat is essential to health and strength." Oh yeah? Then how do these coolies carry pianos and trunks and barrels of flour on their

heads on a strict rice diet? Rice three times a day. For variety rice with fish. Never a shred of red meat; but the strength of giants.

Somehow it's all mixed up and confusing. Snakes kill men but men won't kill snakes. The heat almost paralyses white men yet they climb into full dress suits every night of the year. It's got me baffled. Hey, boy, bring the ouija board.

Believe it or not there's a town in Burma called Yeh. Not Oh Yeah, but just plain Yeh and, it's one of the hop off spots for the Siamese bad lands.

A casual invitation of months ago to join a big borderland reptile hunt, "If you ever get down our way" carried me through the black jungle fringe of Burma's lowlands to this steaming village of tin roofs and mud walls.

Here is the true up-and-at-'em jungle swamps.

Vegetation grows so fast and luxurious here that it throttles cities, overgrows towns and blots out roads. Here lives the hamadryad, fiercest, fastest, fightingest reptile in all the world.

The hamadryad is a giant black and gold cobra three times bigger and five times faster than the hooded horror of India. Except on a flat field, roadway or other smooth surface he can outrun horse or man. He attacks any living moving thing on sight and one squirt from his deadly poison glands brings death.

To say you're going into the jungle to hunt hamadryads is pretty much bunk. You don't

hunt the hamadryads. They hunt you. If you go out to track down a tiger the element of surprise is all yours. You ambush the tiger and smash him down. But you can't put a hamadryad on the spot; the surprise element is all his. He sees you coming and either lies in ambush for you or comes for you like a spluttering sky rocket.

Ever since landing at Bombay, months ago, I heard about the death-dealing hamadryad of Burma and Siam. The thing is talked about, whispered about, feared like the bold bad villain of the fairy tales.

A pale anaemic looking huntsman from Bangalore promised me weeks ago that if we ever met in Burma he'd take me out and give me the thrill of my life. "I'll make the hair jump right off your head," he promised.

"What hair?" I asked. "You'll find out. It will pop off you like quills from a porcupine."

We spent a stifling hot Saturday borrowing pump-action shotguns, and leather togs and camp equipment in Rangoon, then rattled away to Moulmein. We had two hours lay off there so I looked around for "The old Moulmein Pagoda, looking eastward to the sea." There were dozens of red ones, gold ones and common tin pagodas, but as far as I could dope out not a single one faced either eastward or the sea.

The town itself was beautiful, clean and very, very Burmese. No braying Bengals or predatory

Punjabis down here. Just slant-eyed lacquer ladies with a quick up take for the stranger. I ambled all over the town alone having a glorious time with new sights and smells. Scott, the hunter who doesn't look like a hunter, was away on some mysterious mission. When I found him again he looked like a cross between a walking lobster pot and a deep sea diver. He was completely encased in a woven bamboo cage which had slits through the bottom for his leather bound legs, and loop holes through the side for his shotgun.

I laughed out loud to see him walking about like a solemn old penguin, but he told me to calm down. "Cut the cackle and climb into this suit," he ordered, pointing to a bamboo cage. "See how you get along."

I got into the thing and recalled the only time I was ever on the stage. I played the front end of a horse and peeked out through little slits to see that I didn't fall into the orchestra pit. Here I was completely surrounded by bamboo. "I can walk, Scotty, but suppose I fall down?" "In that case you get up again," he said.

The run down to Yeh was through damp lush jungle land. There were mosquitoes almost as big as canaries and elephants were working among the trees.

We rolled into Yeh in solitary grandeur. That's the end of steel and by the time we got there most everybody had left the train. An enormous bell sounded from one of the monasteries and a batta-

lion of yellow robed monks walked over to a high golden pagoda for noonday prayers.

Scott and I hired one of those baby cars, loaded our cages in the back, and went a mile or so into the jungle for a spot of practice. There were big black birds flying slowly overhead, so Scotty knocked a couple of them down. The others put up a terrific squawk and gathered around in hundreds. The air was black with big-beaked birds. I put the pump gun to my shoulder and let fly but I guess I don't count because I never scored a single hit.

"Suffering catfish—did you ever use a gun before?"

"Sure; but I'm better with a rifle."

Scott spat a curved stream passionately and knocked four birds flat with one bam. I tried again then and got two each with two shots.

"All right—let's go," Scott said. "But if you see any sentry or border line or anything sing out and turn back because if we cross into Siam with these guns, they'll jug us sure." "Who'll jug us?" "The Siamese, of course."

"You don't tell me they have troops along this border line, what with the snakes and all?" "You can't tell. They're crafty eggs and any chance to knock a 500 rupee fine out of us would be gobbled up like strawberries and cream. Come on."

We got back into the little car and drove off into the black jungle. It was cool and damp and

dark in there. The road was narrow and full of roots bulging out from the trees. The trees had gorgeous flowers on them and smelled good. There were black monkeys with stubby tails on the flowery trees.

The road got narrower and bumpier every hundred yards and nearly dropped out of sight. We came once to a reddish log lying across the road and stopped. I got out to move the log but Scott ordered me back in. "Into that lobster pot first," he said. "Is this the hamadryad place?" "Certainly—all through here."

I climbed awkwardly into the bamboo and kicked the log into the edge of the jungle. We went in deeper and came across four otters playing in a puddle. They weren't a bit surprised or frightened at us. We didn't shoot them.

"We'll be just about the Siamese border now; this road goes through. We'll start here."

"Any tigers here?" "No."

"Leopards?" "Now and again, but not often."

We cocked the shotguns, poked them through the slits and climbed into the bamboo armor. Then we started stumbling into the jungle. "Hey, Scotty," I yelled, "what about a compass?" "I got one. Keep near me but watch that gun."

We were well into the black jungle now. It was damp and dappled with sunlight. There were no birds around and I wondered why. Somehow

I felt very secure. Then, "Look out! Watch him! Watch him!" A great menacing hood had reared up to the right of Scotty. It wavered there just for a second, then collapsed again.

With his nose straight out, the rear yardage wiggling like a flag in the breeze, the killer came for Scott. He was coming flat to the ground. If I had shot Scott would have got it. He stood calm and ready. The snake reared up again and hesitated, but Scott didn't shoot. It came on faster and rose a third time. Bam! The bird shot landed true and the coiling monster went down in a red mess. I stood transfixed. Scott kicked the snake with his boot and then over his shoulder saw one coming for me. I looked, fired with an automatic jerk and missed. I can't remember firing at all.

I just remember the lidless unblinking eyes as the snake reared up, hesitated a split second and pounced downward. He caught me at the back of my high boot and left two thin purplish streams trickling downwards. I stepped backwards and to the side. The hood rose up again. About the width of an ordinary book. I pulled the trigger but hadn't brought up the new shell and there was a dull click. The snake came crashing against the bamboo with the fury of a tigress. Wham, swish, wham again. The wind was up me vertical. Scott couldn't fire without hitting me, but he was bellowing with fury. I gave a jerk at the gun and swung the new shell in. The snake

coiled himself down like an accordion and I let go.

The big cobra sprang at the same second I fired the shot and crumpled up in a ball.

Scott was still yelling. I don't remember a word he said. I do know that I was suddenly very, very limp and wanted to sit down, but couldn't because of the bamboo basket.

We skinned one of the death snakes and started clumping away through the sun splattered jungle lands. We looked like a pair of muddy hobgoblins. There was no pathway of course and slime covered puddles hedged us in. We'd splash into some of these up to our knees and hope for the best so far as snakes were concerned. Once we came to a tiny clear puddle wiggling and alive with blood sucker. There were little ones black as coal.

We still wore our woven bamboo snake armor and had the shotguns ready to go. It was humid and hot as blazes. Mosquitoes got under our lobster pot armor and feasted on our blood. Scott already had a mild touch of malaria so he didn't mind, but I licked up some quinine.

We stopped under a fat bumpy sort of tree and something came bounding down through the leaves to land at my feet.

We looked up with the guns all ready and saw two lizards fighting. They were big lizards with blue heads and golden colored bodies. The heads were nearly as big as all the rest put together and they were both bleeding from neck wounds.

"Hello!" Scott exclaimed. "Look at that tree." It was covered with mud ten or twelve feet up from the ground. It was some of the dried mud which had clattered down to betray the lizards.

"Mud—what of it?" I asked. "Flood-time mud; we must be at the river bank. Watch these Siamese soldiers. They're crafty and suspicious."

We left the lizards to fight it out and found a narrow path leading down to the river. It was about 75 yards across and there was a cable there with a flat barge fastened on the far bank.

A sort of military outpost was stuck up on stilts there and when we bellowed across a little soldier with big eyes came out and looked at us through field glasses. Two slim women and a man got on the barge and came after us. They spoke Burmese and Siamese, but we couldn't even say yes or no in these languages.

We climbed out of our bamboo coats and got on the barge. Instantly from every tree in the neighborhood baboons came swarming down and leaped on to the barge with us. There were about 40 of them chattering and friendly and tame as pussy cats. They just wanted to migrate to Siam and here was a chance. There were sleek mama baboons with little ones hanging to their backs and big heavy jawed males who looked on us with supreme indifference. They were a very pale gray, almost white and brought a lot of red fruits with them. The fruits looked like figs. Scott said

they were good so I wanted to try one and eased up to the baboons. The current was swift and kept tugging at the barge pulling it sideways. The baboons looked at me friendly enough so, when I saw a couple of the fig things on the planks, reached out for it.

A big bull baboon, seeing my idea, nonchalantly picked up one of the fruits and handed it to me. "There ought to be a sign here," Scott grinned.

"A sign?" "Sure—'baboons will please not feed the men'."

I couldn't think up a quick answer, but tore into the fig and it was a failure because little woolly worms had beaten me to it.

When we touched the Siamese bank the monks scattered silently into the trees and the pint-size trooper came out making a big fuss. He finally managed to say "passa porta", but we just laughed it off. I'm no Carnera myself but I could have picked this lad up and tossed him into the river.

He was baffled and kept pawing through his book of rules. The Burmese women who had brought us over pointed at their foreheads and then at the bungalow up on the stilts. We didn't know what it all meant but went inside and they gave us some tea. The soldier kept standing around making noises like a parrot and the women kept pointing to their foreheads.

Finally they went outside and started hitting a

piece of railroad track that hung there and a boy done up like an aviator came sleepily out of the jungle. He tried a couple of other languages and then said in English. "Who are you?" "I'm Trader Horn—that other guy is Robinson Crusoe," I said. He barked at the parrot man and this was written in a book. Laboriously the two of them went through a lot of idiotic red tape and we tried to think up idiotic answers. Scott said his father was Rin Tin Tin and I said I was a professional snake charmer.

"What's the matter with these women?" we asked. "They want you to do something for them." "Always oblige baffled Burmese beauties," Scott said. "Right thing. Code of honor and all that. Playing fields of Eton." The women got up and led us through high snake grass to a clearing.

There were five huts there of woven palm leaf and bamboo. They were stuck up on bamboo stilts with a ladder leading up to each one. At night when the prowling killers came around they pulled the ladders up and slept in what these people call peace.

The women took us to a stout stockade divided inside like a crossword puzzle. There were sleek buffalo there, a few goats, hundreds of small chickens, one cow and a sick dog. Those with 22 people made up this Siamese village. The dog was a long-haired mongrel, blind and earless.

"Panther," the Burmese said. "Black panther kill cow, kill goat, kill boy, hurt dog."

"Killed a boy?" Scott demanded. "Boy die two days back. Boy's mother want white man kill panther with guns."

"Hasn't anybody here got a gun?" "Soldier have gun."

"Well, what about him?" "No bullet."

"Righto," Scott said. "Bring that soldier here. Tell him we'll stay one night. If the panther comes around we'll get him."

"Panther come every night. Sometimes come day time. Kill baboon."

"You must be crazy," I said. "We've only got shotguns and bird loads. Might as well try to floor an elephant with a pea shooter."

"Well, we can't lose," the sniper promised. "We sit up in one of those shacks, draw up the ladder and hope." "But panthers climb trees." "Sure they do. But they don't climb huts. Let's go."

The women, still pointing to their foreheads, took us into one of the huts. It shook a bit under our weight. The women brought us a snipe curry and some dried fish. The food made me drowsy and I fell asleep with the peaceful suddenness of a baby. It was just twilight when Scott shook me. It was dark in the hut but light outside. He pointed across the compound where a fat black panther was leaning back on his haunches and yawning. He was old and fat. A man-eater, they

said. There was a 75 rupee ($25) reward for his black hide. If we'd had a rifle he was easy pickings but with bird loads in a shot-gun it was dangerous.

Light was gradually fading out in a coral glow and the black killer, sleek and well fed, was taking his own good time about tracking down the evening rations.

Sitting behind me in our shack on stilts the Bangalore man swore deeply in Hindustani. At last he unwound his long thin legs and said: "I think he'd fight."

"Fight? What do you mean fight?" "Just that. He'd stand. He wouldn't run. He's had everything his own way around here."

"Where does all that get us?" "It gets us a black hide. I'm going down."

"He'll only run away," I argued. "If not he'll drain your veins. This thing has killed a boy already. He knows human blood."

"I got six bird shots," he said, pushing open the woven door. At once the animal was alert, ready for action. He looked up ready to fight or run. Scott ran the ladder down from our platform and the beast stood his ground. I could see his tail twitching slowly.

"What about me?" "C'mon down. Nice black pussy cat here. Let's get her."

We started across the clearing with the panther laying his ears back and slowly backing up. With a rifle we couldn't have missed. The long fat

beast was growling slowly. It was more like a whine. He kept backing away from us but we were gaining on him.

Suddenly he leaped sideways and ran for cover. Scott's gun roared out and we both knew the panther would have enough holes in his hide to infuriate him but certainly not enough to damage him.

He turned and started back toward us, belly flat to the ground. He was slinking like a big snake and quite silent. He came on slowly and then leaned back ready to leap. Bam! We both let him have a barrel in the head. He leaped straight in the air. Must have been ten feet straight up. The whole front part of his face was blown in and he was blind as a bat but he still leaped around like a chicken with its head off. His great paws were gashing the ground and digging up soft muck and the creepiest sound you'd ever hear was escaping with the frothy blood from his throat. It was a sound like the wails of a baby heard from far away.

Scott went up close; a dangerous thing to do. The big animal couldn't see him but he was hurling his 250 pounds of man crushing hide around like it was a rubber ball and if he had happened to touch the man it was a red farewell for him.

"Show you how to get a Carnera size cat on the fly," he laughed. The huge cat heard him and lashed out with his paw like a first baseman snaring a wide throw. Then he leaped straight up

again and the shotgun roared twice. The panther sprawled sideways, got up again for a brief instant and sank on his back with his four paws pointing upwards.

The villagers who had been watching our show came down from their tree shacks and started a wild throbbing dance around the carcass. The men held spluttering torches aloft while the women danced to music they hummed themselves. One of them had a drum strapped behind her and they all wore high steepled hats like golden pagodas. It was a weird, barbarous sight there as the moon came up.

They kept this up for hours and then made garlands of purple flowers to put around our necks. Not one or two skimpy garlands but dozens of them. We dragged what was left of the carcass to our shack on stilts and started to skin it but the women who had pleaded with us to shoot the thing in the first place wanted to know if we'd leave it till morning so they could show the children.

It was a spooky sort of night there in the jungle. We could hear the river splashing past and the crocodiles making noises like giant bull-frogs. Now and again we'd hear animals go under our shack and once I heard some padded beast stop and breathe deeply as if trying to smell us.

"Hey, Scotty," I said. He wasn't asleep either. "Tiger—right underneath." We sat listening intently. The only sound was the distant crocodiles

and the sniffing underneath. Scott lit a cigarette and whatever the animal was moved off into the clearings. There was some moon and we stood there trying to catch a glimpse, but we never saw anything.

Hours later I woke again with the creepy feeling that something was watching me. The woven bamboo windows of our shack were closed but I had the feeling something was looking through. I lay watching the opening. It moved and then there was a scratching noise. I wiggled over close to the window. The scratching came on again and then a thin black arm reached through the bamboo and felt its way about crazily. A chimpanzee, I thought. I didn't see any chance for the monk to get his mouth through and bite me so I grabbed the arm and bent it down.

Shrieks and yelps and hullabaloo cut the air. It sounded as if I had a whole pack of hounds by the tail. Scott jumped up ready for murder and somebody in one of the other shacks lit a torch.

"Got something, Scotty—what is it, a chimp?" We examined the wiggling pulling arm. It was black and wiry. "Looks like a chimp," he said. "Shall I pull him in?"

"Wait till I get a handkerchief. We'll tie up his jaw like he had the mumps." At a signal from me Scott swung open the bamboo window, I jerked the monk inside and pinned him down by the throat. He didn't get a chance to bite, but

scratched quite a bit. He was the oddest looking monk I ever saw; coal black with a yellow mane like a lion. A small lion in reverse colors. Where the lion is yellow this little squealer was black and where the lion is black he was yellow. His eyes were sunk deep in his head and he kept jumping up and down even when we roped his feet.

In the morning we found children from a half dozen villages on both sides of the border grouped admiringly around our black panther, but worms had got to him already and there was no use skinning him.

When we recrossed the muddy stream into Burma 40 or 50 big gray baboons leaped on the barge again and rode across with us. I carried our little lion monkey and called him Leo. We had to walk down a narrow pathway wearing the awful snake proof armor we had come with so that meant Leo had to be dragged behind on a string. We still had his mouth tied up and he was furious but when we got to the car and got it headed back toward Moulmein by the simple idea of lifting it and turning it around Leo was thrilled and delighted. He leaned his head into the breeze and put up a fine chatter of glee even through the handkerchief.

Getting rid of that monk once we got him to Rangoon proved a man size job. First of all the hotel raised a rumpus about my having him. "You can keep him in the basement one night; but tomorrow he goes," the head man ordered. I de-

cided then to be big hearted and present him to the zoo but the zoo didn't think it such a hot idea.

"You might bring him around," the head baboon man said hollowly. "All right—how do I get there?"

"Take the golden dragon bus to the monastery stop. The monastery for female priests. Then turn right."

That sounded adventuresome so I strolled into the glare of a Rangoon noonday with a black baboon under my arm and tried to be nonchalant about these and those. A curious collection of coolie boys came clattering along behind and I saw it would simplify everything if they'd take the monk and make him one of the gang. As I offered him both the boys and the monk put up a row. I didn't blame the monkey.

The red bus was crowded and I had to stand while some women started chattering and laughing to themselves.

The bus was called golden dragon because it had a dragon's picture painted on the front instead of a name. What good are names where people can't read. A Burmese who carried an umbrella twice as big as himself told me this and then added with a glint in his eye: "The ladies want to know what your boy friend's name is."

"Ming Too—full-blooded Burmese," I said, but the gag fell dead.

I got off by the monastery into a milling mob

of women with shaved heads. About 3,000 of them out for their evening stroll. Every true Buddhist Burmese serves a short time as priest and these sleek-faced women seemed to be thriving on the diet. They giggled at the baboon, too, and I was tempted to let him go and let them do the worrying.

The zoo was just back of the monastery and after I'd warmed a bench for an hour a clerk said the assistant assistant to somebody's assistant would see my specimen now. They took Leo through the door and brought him back with a note saying he was too common and would I please take him away.

I tucked the monk under my arm and invaded the sanctum of this fourth assistant to somebody's assistant. "You'll have to kill this fellow," I said, trying to sound important. He hemmed and hawed and finally telephoned a doctor who was on some sort of experimental work with snake antitoxin. The snake man said to bring the monk over so I had another bus ride and had to crash through four or five flunkeys before I could get near the doctor.

"Just at the right moment—I've been using rats," he said happily. "Would you like to see my antitoxin for the viper?"

"You mean in action?" "Of course."

"Sure, but I guess it's so long Leo." "You distrust me too early; come along." We went up on a flat roof where dozens of snakes lay in cages.

In the centre was a sort of pit with little mounds in it. Obviously the black baboon wouldn't stay there while a snake cut him down so they pinned the brown reptile to the ground with a long wooden prong, dumped him into a cage with the monkey and saw him slowly coil back and lash out with a noisy swoosh. The monk put up a good fight but was soon feet up to the sky and apparently dead.

He was whipped out of the cage and given a double dose of the poison killer and when I came away was able to sit up and eat bananas in his own gleeful way again.

I walked the four miles back to the waterfront by way of the rice market and the teeming teak bazaars. Men there were cutting out gods and elephants and water buffaloes from great chunks of golden wood. Beyond was the muddy Irrawaddy with the Mandalay steamers tooting in impatience to be away. There was a rusty old tramp of a ship lying at the flotilla landing stage with the Blue Peter jaunty and gay on the foremast.

Sailing Day. That's what the Blue Peter means. "Where away?" I shouted to the skipper. He was the only white man aboard; a round roly poly old time sea master.

"Penang, Sumatra, Borneo," he yelled back. "Borneo! Gosh; you got room for a passenger?" "Sure; lots of room. Plenty of it. Come on."

I hurried back and packed gear by the toss-in

route. It was farewell to incredible India. Less than an hour later we were downbound in the mud behind a China tramp. Bound for Borneo with 500 Angora goats for fellow passengers. So long, India.

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